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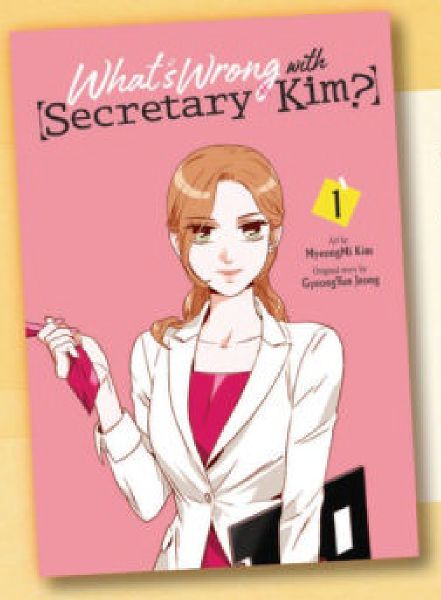

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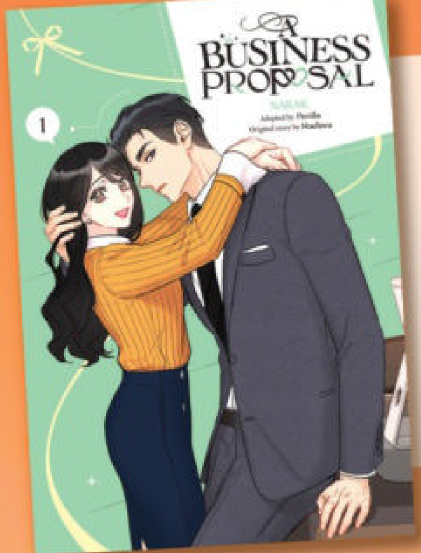

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Elin Hilderbrand

The bestselling author kicks off the summer with her stellar *The Five-Star Weekend*. See our review on p. 49.

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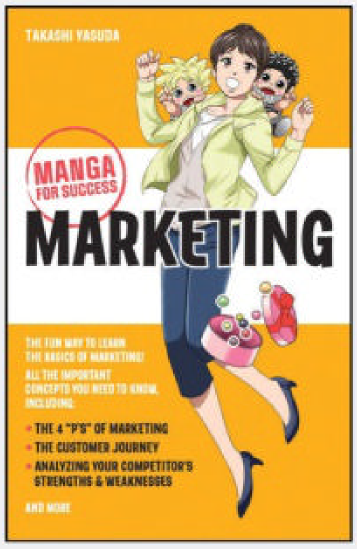
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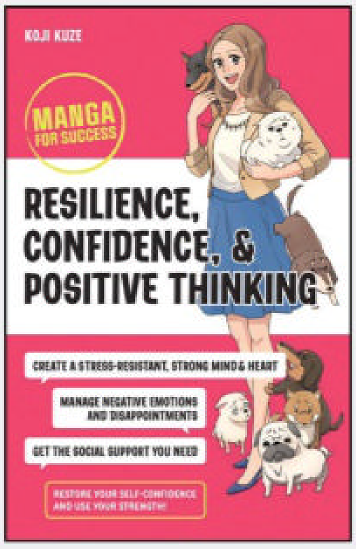
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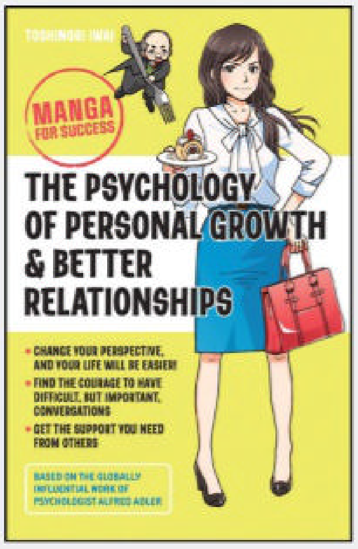
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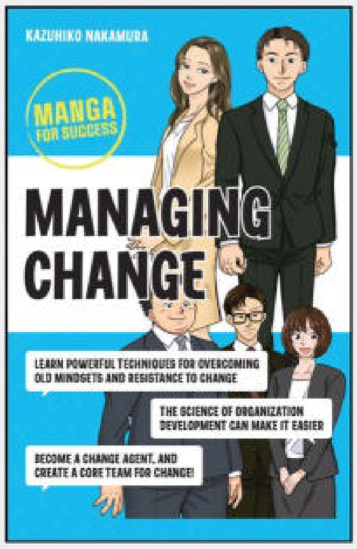
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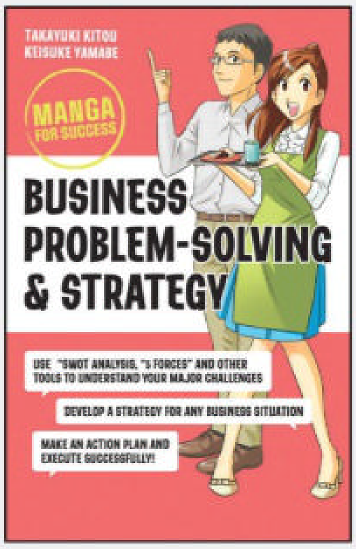
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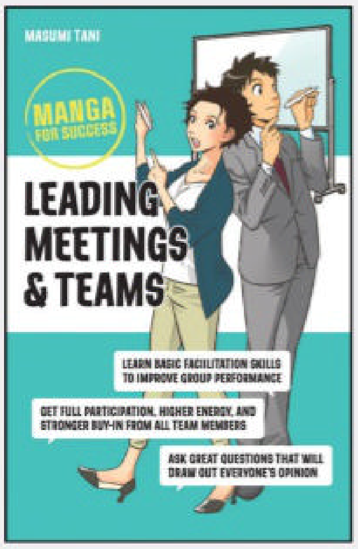
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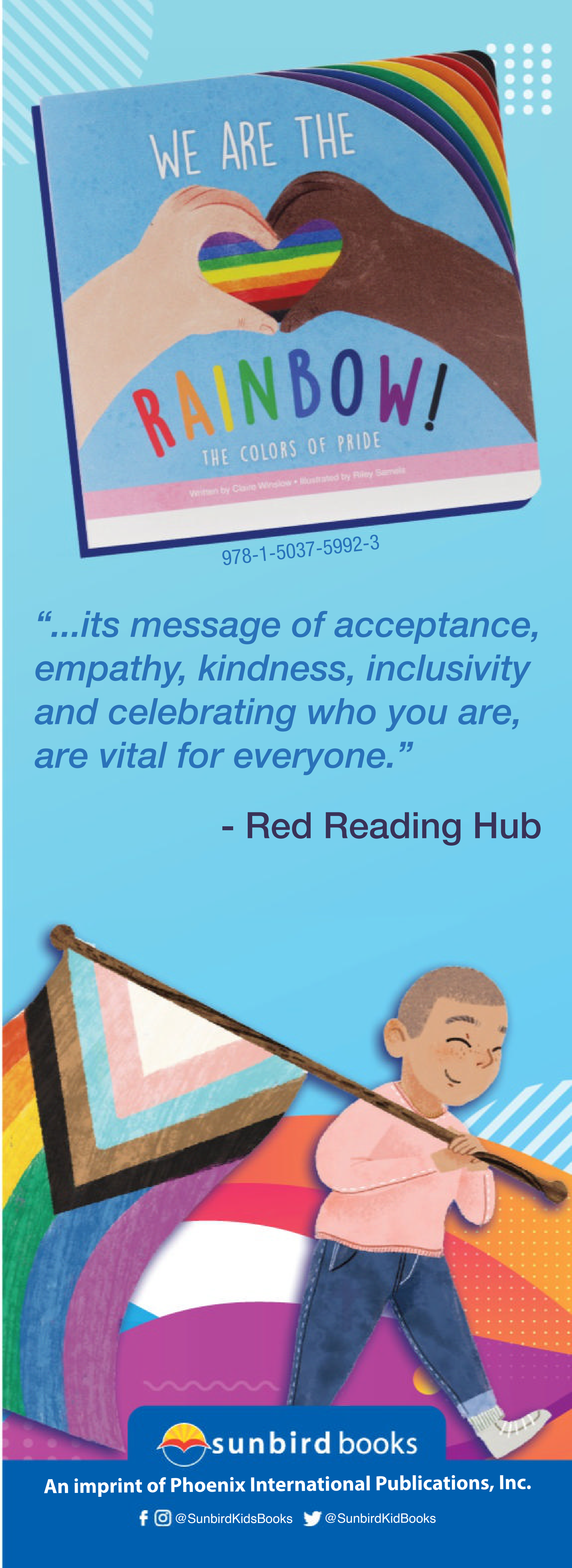

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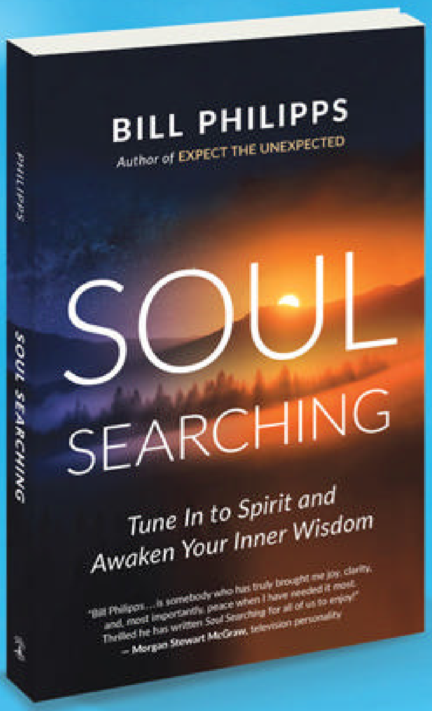
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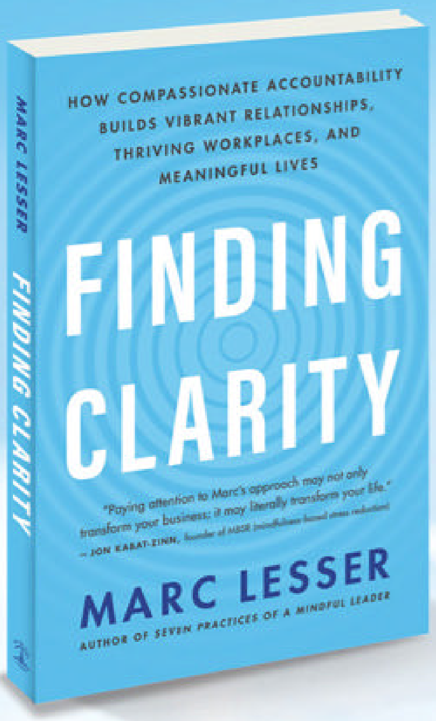
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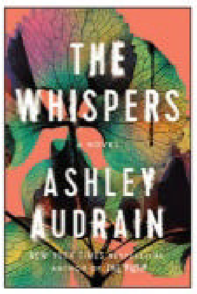

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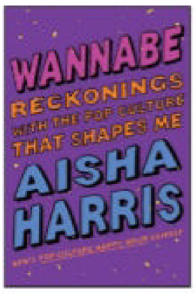

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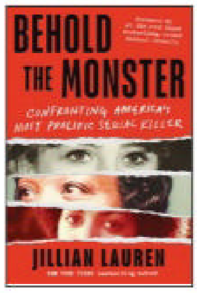

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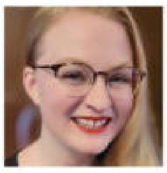

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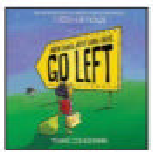

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Dr. Ida Acuña-Garza believes that children's books are the best avenues for parents to teach life skills to their children and develop their reading, comprehension, and values. Among her must-read, published, bilingual children's books are *From the Windowpane: A Book about the Pandemic, Super Copper - Yoga Cat, The Adventures of Callie: Callie Finds a Home, The Adventures of Callie: Callie's New Friends, The Birthday Party,* and *The Cat Who Ate Spinach/El Gato Que Comia Las Espinacas.*

In some of her books, she gives personality to adorable cats. In two of her books, *The Adventures of Callie: Callie Finds a Home* and *The Adventures of Callie: Callie's New Friends*, she narrates the story of a rescued Calico cat called Callie. In *Callie Finds a Home*, an abandoned Calico kitten is found near a veterinary clinic. Fortunately, one of the veterinary technicians saves Callie and turns her life around.

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PRESS&MEDIA

The Week in **Publishing**

A new PEN America report documents how state legislation across the country is driving an alarming spike in book bans in schools. “The heavy-handed tactics of state legislators are mandating book bans, plain and simple,” said Suzanne Nossel, CEO of PEN America.

Theresa Zoro has been named president, and Diana Baroni publisher and editor-in-chief, of the Harmony and Rodale imprints, in Sanyu Dillon’s first big move as president of Random House Publishing Group.

Hachette Book Group’s first-quarter sales fell 11% compared to the first three months of 2022. Total revenue at HBG’s parent company, Lagardère, rose 3% over the same period in 2022, to €570 million.

Michael Denneny, an early champion of LGBTQ writers and stories while an editor at Macmillan, St. Martin’s Press, and Crown Publishing, died April 12. He was 80. One of the many notable books Denneny edited in his 35-year career was *And the Band Played On* by Randy Shilts.

Orbit has launched a new imprint, Orbit Works, which will publish exclusively in digital formats and be led by Orbit executive editor Brit Hvide and editor Stephanie Clark.

Online & On-Air

Velocity of Content

At this year’s London Book Fair, worries over machine-written content and related threats to copyright and creativity proliferated. Senior writer Andrew Albanese recaps London’s AI-focused discussions.

publishersweekly.com/london-ai

More to Come

Reviews editor Meg Lemke interviews cartoonist Archie Bongiovanni about the release of their new graphic novel, *Mimosa*, which follows a lively group of queer and trans friends organizing a dance night for a crowd of former party animals who are now over 30.

publishersweekly.com/bongiovanni

Children’s Bookshelf

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Concerns over censorship at Scholastic’s Rising Voices Library arose last week after writer Maggie Tokuda-Hall was asked to revise an author’s note in her book about Japanese American incarceration during WWII.

publishersweekly.com/tokuda-hall

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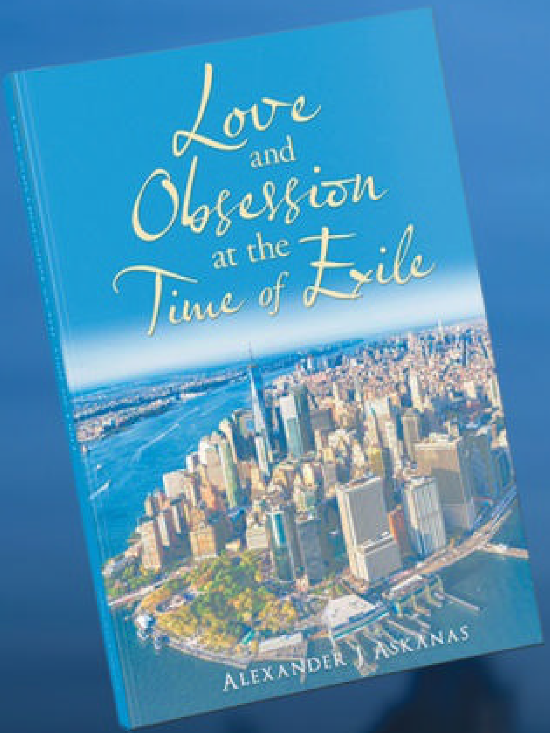

Love and Obsession at the Time of Exile

ALEXANDER J ASKANAS

Alexander J Askanas was a cardiologist in New York. He spent his early childhood in Warsaw Ghetto, which was used as the setting of his third book, *Love and Obsession at the Time of Exile*. The book chronicles the story of Adam, a young cardiologist who is obsessed with love, and his love for a young Jewish girl.

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Lacey's Room

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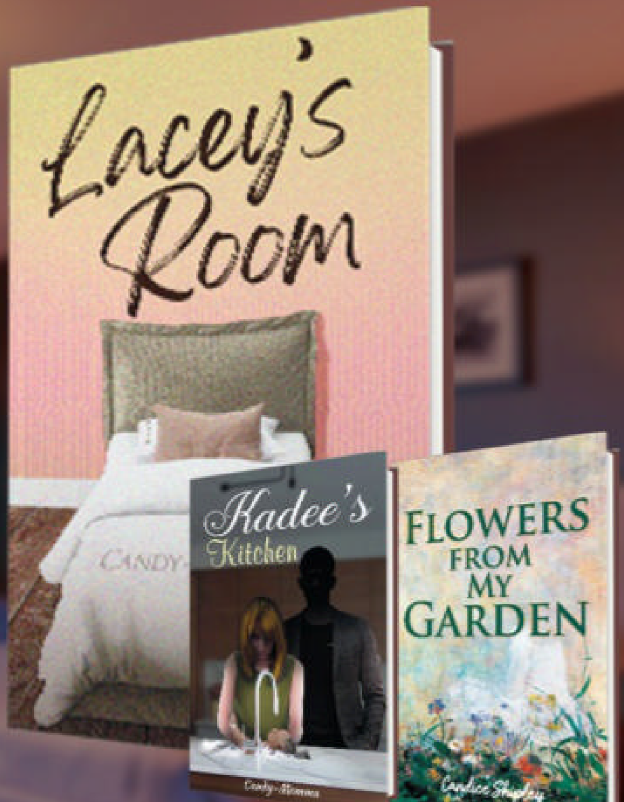

Highlighting the importance of staying in tune with teenage sons and daughters and lifting their confidence, Candice Shipley, a retired cosmetologist and business owner, writes *Lacey's Room* with the intention of coaching girls and boys about the Southern, all-American way of life. She has also written the books, *Flowers from My Garden* and *Kadee's Kitchen*. She also writes under the pen name Candy-Momma.

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News

London Gets Its Groove Back

This year's London Book Fair was the biggest, and the best, since 2019

ALL LONDON BOOK FAIR PHOTOS BY EDWARD NAWOTKA

Olympia London played host to the largest London Book Fair since 2019.

The London Book Fair recovered from a postpandemic lull last year and returned for its April 18–20 run with an expanded rights center and an increase in attendance. The roster of events looked at a wide range of issues, including the impact of inflation and the war in Ukraine on publishing, the growth in the number of bookstores around the world, and the ongoing fallout from Brexit, which has made book exports from the U.K. to continental Europe more challenging and expensive. The consequence of that, several U.K. publishers told *PW*, is that they may now look to forge new relationships or strengthen existing ones with North American partners.

One topic that proved more important than anyone anticipated was the opportunities—or threats, depending on one's point of view—to the book industry presented by new artificial intelligence tools, such as ChatGPT4. AI has the potential to disrupt the entire value chain, from book production and translation to sales, marketing, and supply chain management. "AI isn't the central topic of conversation now, but it will be the topic of conversation by Frankfurt," said Christy Fletcher, co-head of the book division of United Talent Agency. She pointed to the recent publication of Reid Hoffman's *Impromptu: Amplifying Our Humanity Through AI* as a harbinger of a trend of authors writing books in collaboration with ChatGPT4. AI speculation aside, Fletcher said that it was "good to be back in London" and "to see many colleagues that we have missed since 2019," adding that the rights activity at the fair was robust.

Fletcher was among the large contingent of U.S. literary agents who made the trip to London and helped fill an expanded rights center, which attracted about 500 agents. Last year, the configuration of the exhibit floor, which brought the rights center closer to the exhibitors stands, was welcomed, as it made getting to meetings easier. This year, with inflation pushing up the price of stands, numerous publishers—including many small- to mid-size U.S. publishers—shrank their stands or opted not to have them, while the agents center expanded and was sold out. As a consequence, many publishers and agents were looking for places to hold meetings. "You can only do so many stand-up meetings before your feet hurt," said one agent, who lamented the dearth of public seating and snack bars. "It's one thing to take a meeting while sitting on the floor, and another thing to be forced to eat lunch on the floor."

Another agent joked that if things keep going this way, "soon the London Book Fair will be just a giant IRC [International Rights Center] with someone standing in front handing out issues of *PW* as people go in."

In what was seen by many as an effort to boost traffic to exhibitors on the final day of the fair, LBF closed the IRC at 1 p.m., earlier than on the first two days, while booths remained open until later in the afternoon.

World events impacted the fair in several ways. The Monday before LBF, Ernest Moret, foreign rights manager for the French publisher La Fabrique Éditions, was detained by U.K. police upon arriving at St. Pancras Station. He was questioned, according to reports, to determine if he was engaged in terrorist acts or in possession of material for use in terrorism. He was also reportedly asked whether he could name "antigovernment" authors included in the La Fabrique catalog, according to a joint announcement from La

HarperCollins CEO Brian Murray (r.) discussed industry trends as LBF chair David Roche looked on.

Fabrique and Verso Books.

Moret was released after being held for about 24 hours, but his release did not put an end to the incident; he's due back in London in four weeks. "To ask the representative of a publishing house questions, in a counterterrorism framework, about the opinions of its authors, is to take the logic of political censorship and repression of dissenting currents of thought even further," said a second joint statement from La Fabrique and Verso.

United Talent Agency literary group co-heads Christy Fletcher (l.) and Byrd Leavell (r.), with Jonny Geller of Curtis Brown in the agents center.

Before the keynotes began, Olena Zelenska, the first lady of Ukraine, and Oleksandr Tkachenko, culture minister of Ukraine, offered a prerecorded video message to open the fair, where Ukraine was the spotlight country. Zelenska evoked Ray Bradbury's *Fahrenheit 451* in noting that books have been burned in the war in Ukraine, while Tkachenko underscored that Russia has actively attacked cultural institutions and publishing houses, destroying 528 libraries. Books are seen by both as a means of fighting the war.

"Books are our witnesses," Zelenska said. "They feel what we feel." She added that publishing has been "changed by the war," and there is now more of a focus on nonfiction books that document the events of the day. Both Zelenska and Tkachenko offered their hope that the support of publishing and the culture industries around the world can expedite an end to the war. "We want you to read about this war in history books and not watch it on the news," Zelenska noted.

The state of the industry

Several thousand people from the U.S. typically attend LBF, though this year—like in 2022—they were less prevalent than before the pandemic. HarperCollins CEO Brian Murray was the most prominent American who had a visible presence at the fair, giving the keynote address on the first day. Murray observed that after two years of unprecedented sales growth during the pandemic, the book business is coming back to earth, though there are "positive signs out there" for the industry. "I often refer to it as if we had a pandemic party in the industry and at the end of 2022 was the hangover. And we're just getting through the hangover now."

At an LBF kickoff party held by the Dutch Foundation for Literature, British author Gwendolyn Riley (r.) was joined by the evening's host Max Liu, literary journalist for the Guardian.

Murray pointed out that though sales fell last year, they are still well above prepandemic levels. As business settles down, he sees the industry returning to more typical annual growth rates of 2%–3%.

Looking ahead, Murray said publishing is still dealing with high inflation, and he spoke of how it's beginning to wrestle with the challenge posed by generative AI, which he called unpredictable. "We know that it's going to be important and it's going to have a major impact on our industry over the next three to five years," he noted. "And so I think a lot of a lot of us are trying to figure out how and to make sure we employ it an ethical, moral way that helps us serve authors and provide professional services to authors and doesn't compete with authors and storytelling. And that's a challenge—not so much for all the publishers that are here, but I guarantee you there are a lot of little tech teams around the world that might be coming after our business. They're not publishers, they're not editors. They're the technologists, and they see an opportunity."

AI was also discussed on a number of panels. "AI might kill us all, but if it doesn't, it could be a useful tool for writers and publishers," conceded Nigel Newton, president of the U.K. Publishers Association and head of Bloomsbury, during a panel on prospects for the global publishing industry. "It is going to give a great edge to those publishers who get it right and could have a significant impact on marketing, peer review, academic research, and the supply chain."

Maria Pallante, CEO of the Association of American Publishers, remarked that the AAP is keeping an eye on the development of AI and that it is likely a watershed moment for the industry and technology, much like the development of the internet. "We have to watch the way that copyright protections are implemented and ensure that not too many legal exceptions are made when it comes to AI-generated text," she said. "Protecting the author and publisher's IP is paramount."

AI was also one of the topics at a panel featuring four chief technology officers. It's one of the reasons, they said, that IT has moved from being viewed as a back-office operation to being viewed as integral to the industry. “It could be said that the focus of technology for publishers today is not so much the media and the format in which content is consumed, but rather the processes, tools, data analytics, and the infrastructure that underpins these business-critical things,” said Chris Harvey, CEO of publishing solutions provider Virtusales.

Pan Macmillan’s James Long noted that data is “the bedrock of publishing activity” today. “The industry has moved from a books and print mentality to files and metadata,” he added.

But publishing’s rapidly evolving future had the panel most intrigued. Referring to the hype around AI, the panelists suggested it could be especially powerful in helping publishers meet a vital business need: connecting more directly with consumers. “A common part of the publishing landscape is that a lot of publishers don’t have direct relationships with their consumers,” Bonnier’s Nick Wright noted. “Using AI could give a better understanding of who is buying what and open up a lot of opportunities for more targeted publishing.”

Long said AI was still in the ”risk and opportunity” phase for publishers.

LBF wasn’t just full of speeches and tech talk, of course. Deals were done, and attendees were eyeing global trends. “The London Book Fair is always the best place to see evolving genres and spot the differences in my home market and the English-market,” said Merve Diler, literary agent, adult fiction, at Karlem Literary Agency in Istanbul. “I see that memoirs are doing well in English and Europe, but it is not the same for the Turkish market.”

Joe Schick, a digital marketing and project consultant from Massachusetts, was satisfied with his first return visit to LBF in several years. “It’s almost like the good old days, and you can really feel the buzz of people enjoying getting back together,” he said. He added that he had “several hot leads” for projects that made the trip financially worthwhile, as well.

OverDrive CEO Steve Potash was also glad to see LBF return to form. “There has been so much foot traffic and a real sense of optimism and engagement from every aspect of the publishing business,” he said. “I’m running into so many old friends.” He added that he had “very productive meetings” with U.S. publishers as well as OverDrive’s U.K. partners.

—Ed Nawotka and Andrew Albanese

The Weekly Scorecard

Print Sales Droop Due to Tough Easter Comparisons

The late Easter in 2022 came back to bite book sales in the week ended Apr. 15, 2023. With the holiday already past, units fell 27% compared to the similar week last year, which led up to Easter Sunday, at outlets that report to Circana BookScan. Sales for the year to date were down 1.9%, with holiday sales now completely accounted for and comparisons more meaningful. All categories had declines in the most recent week. Adult fiction suffered the least, with sales falling 7.9%. Two of the top three bestsellers in the category were new. *Yours Truly* by Abby Jimenez was the #1 adult fiction book, selling more than 23,000 copies in its first week. John Sandford’s latest, *Dark Angel*, was in third place, selling nearly 22,000 copies. Sales in adult nonfiction and YA fiction both dropped 14.6%. In adult nonfiction, two new releases were among the top 10 bestsellers: *Truly Simple* by Kristin Cavallari was in third place, selling more than 14,000 copies, and Jeffrey Eisner’s *Super Shortcut Instant Pot* was in the fifth spot, selling nearly 12,000 copies. The juvenile categories had the biggest declines, with fiction sales plunging 47.7% and nonfiction falling 45.9%. Religion books still were popular in nonfiction, with *The Beginner’s Bible* at #1, selling about 3,600 copies (in the previous week, *My First Read and Learn Bible* was #1, selling nearly 12,000 copies). Dav Pilkey’s *Twenty Thousand Fleas Under the Sea (Dog Man #11)* remained in the top spot in juvenile fiction, selling more than 60,000 copies, down from the more than 153,000 copies sold in the prior week.

TOTAL SALES OF PRINT BOOKS (IN THOUSANDS)

	APR. 16, 2022	APR. 15, 2023	CHGE WEEK	CHGE YTD
Total	16,102	11,751	-27.0%	-1.9%

UNIT SALES OF PRINT BOOKS BY CATEGORY (IN THOUSANDS)

	APR. 16, 2022	APR. 15, 2023	CHGE WEEK	CHGE YTD
Adult Nonfiction	5,289	4,517	-14.6%	-4.4%
Adult Fiction	3,226	2,971	-7.9%	5.4%
Juvenile Nonfiction	1,677	908	-45.9%	-7.5%
Juvenile Fiction	5,078	2,665	-47.7%	-4.7%
Young Adult Fiction	564	482	-14.6%	2.4%
Young Adult Nonfiction	88	72	-18.3%	-5.8%

UNIT SALES OF PRINT BOOKS BY FORMAT (IN THOUSANDS)

	APR. 16, 2022	APR. 15, 2027	CHGE WEEK	CHGE YTD
Hardcover	4,657	3,232	-30.6%	-4.6%
Trade Paperback	8,889	7,107	-20.1%	-0.4%
Mass Market Paperback	599	423	-29.3%	-17.9%
Board Books	1,492	648	-56.6%	2.4%

SOURCE: CIRCANA BOOKSCAN AND PUBLISHERS WEEKLY. BOOKSCAN’S U.S. CONSUMER MARKET PANEL COVERS APPROXIMATELY 80% OF THE PRINT BOOK MARKET AND CONTINUES TO GROW.

PW U.S. BOOK SHOW

CONNECTING THE COMMUNITY BUILDING BUZZ AROUND BOOKS

HYBRID CONFERENCE MAY 22–25, 2023

KEEGAN-MICHAEL KEY
EMMY AWARD-WINNING ACTOR, WRITER, AND PRODUCER

ELLE KEY
AWARD-WINNING FILM AND TELEVISION
DIRECTOR, WRITER AND PRODUCER

SARAH JESSICA PARKER
EMMY AWARD-WINNING ACTRESS

KIM COLEMAN FOOTE
AUTHOR

LAUREN GROFF IN CONVERSATION WITH MEG WOLITZER
BESTSELLING AUTHORS

JACQUELINE WOODSON
MacARTHUR "GENIUS,"
NATIONAL BOOK AWARD
WINNER AND AUTHOR

MEG MEDINA
NATIONAL AMBASSADOR FOR
YOUNG PEOPLE'S LITERATURE

ROZ CHAST
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Starting Salaries at Big Publishers Grow

As of April 1, the average entry-level salary for publishing employees located in New York City at the Big Five trade publishers and Scholastic was $47,583, up from $38,583 before the Covid-19 pandemic, according to a recent survey conducted by *PW*. That marks an increase of 23.3%, during a period when prices rose 12.4%, according to the U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics.

Entry-Level Salaries, 2020 v. 2023

	PUBLISHER	2020 ENTRY LEVEL SALARY	2023 ENTRY LEVEL SALARY	HOURS PER WORKWEEK
1	Penguin Random House	$40,000	$48,000	35
2	HarperCollins	$35,500	$47,500	35
3	Simon & Schuster	$45,000	$50,000	40
4	Hachette	$38,000	$47,500	35
5	Macmillan	$35,000	$45,500	40
6	Scholastic	$38,000	$45,000	35

SOURCE: HACHETTE BOOK GROUP, HARPERCOLLINS, MACMILLAN, PENGUIN RANDOM HOUSE, SCHOLASTIC, AND SIMON & SCHUSTER

Publishers raced to increase starting salaries beginning in 2020, after the onset of the pandemic and the murder of George Floyd by Minneapolis police prompted book business workers to call attention to social justice causes, including the need for publishing employees to make a living wage. Another round of salary increases occurred earlier this year across the Big Five—including at HarperCollins, where union members ended a three-month strike in February.

According to the publishers polled in this survey, staffers work between 35 and 40 hours a week, depending on the company, and all are eligible for overtime. Respondents to the industrywide 2022 *PW* salary survey said they were working an average of 42 hours per week—including time outside the office—the same number of hours they reported working in 2021. The survey also found that median compensation for staff with less than five years of experience was $46,000 for editorial, $48,000 for sales and marketing, and $61,500 for operations and production.

While publishers would of course not divulge plans for further changes to entry-level salaries in the future, HarperCollins is bound by its new union contract to increase its starting salary for union workers over the coming years. According to the agreement, "in terms of minimum salaries, the lowest salary, $47,500, will increase to $48,500 in January 2024 and go up to $50,000 in January 2025." In addition, a representative from HarperCollins noted that New York employees covered by the union who make less than $60,000 can work two hours of overtime per week without manager preapproval.

PW will follow up on the information presented in this survey in our annual salary survey later this year.

—Jim Milliot

Self-Published Authors Make Gains

A survey commissioned by ALLi, the Alliance of Independent Authors, found that self-published authors' incomes increased substantially in 2022 compared to 2021, and that, on average, independent authors earn more than authors published by traditional houses.

According to the survey results, the average income for self-published authors rose 53% last year over the year before, reaching a median of $12,749. The most recent Authors Guild survey, in 2018, found that the median income of traditionally published authors was $6,080, down 24% from 2014. (The guild is in the process of conducting a new survey; results are expected to be released later this year.) Nearly 60% of respondents to the ALLi survey said their income had risen in 2022.

The average income of respondents was over $82,600 last year, an increase of 34%. The discrepancy between the median and average author income is the result of outliers on both the high end of the earning pool and the low end. The report found that almost a quarter of respondents had not yet started to earn money from their writing, bringing in between $0 and $1,000, while 28% were generating more than six figures. Almost half of the respondents (43.8%) reported incomes of more than $20,000.

Another indication that interest in self-publishing remains high is the fact that 25% of respondents said they

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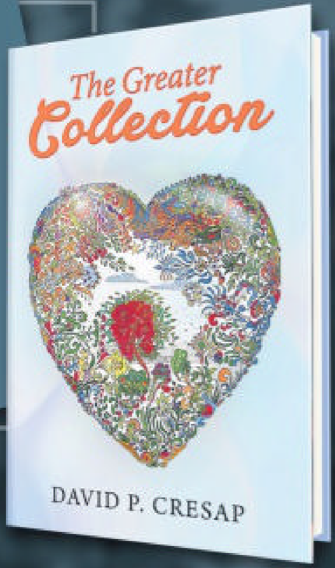
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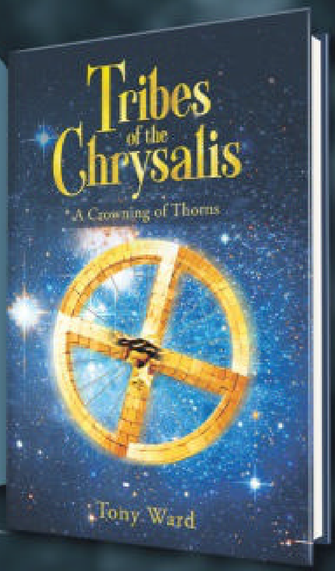
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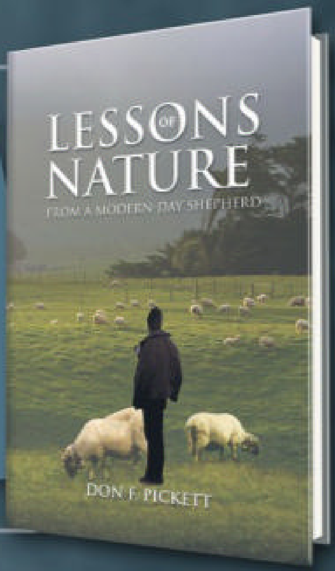
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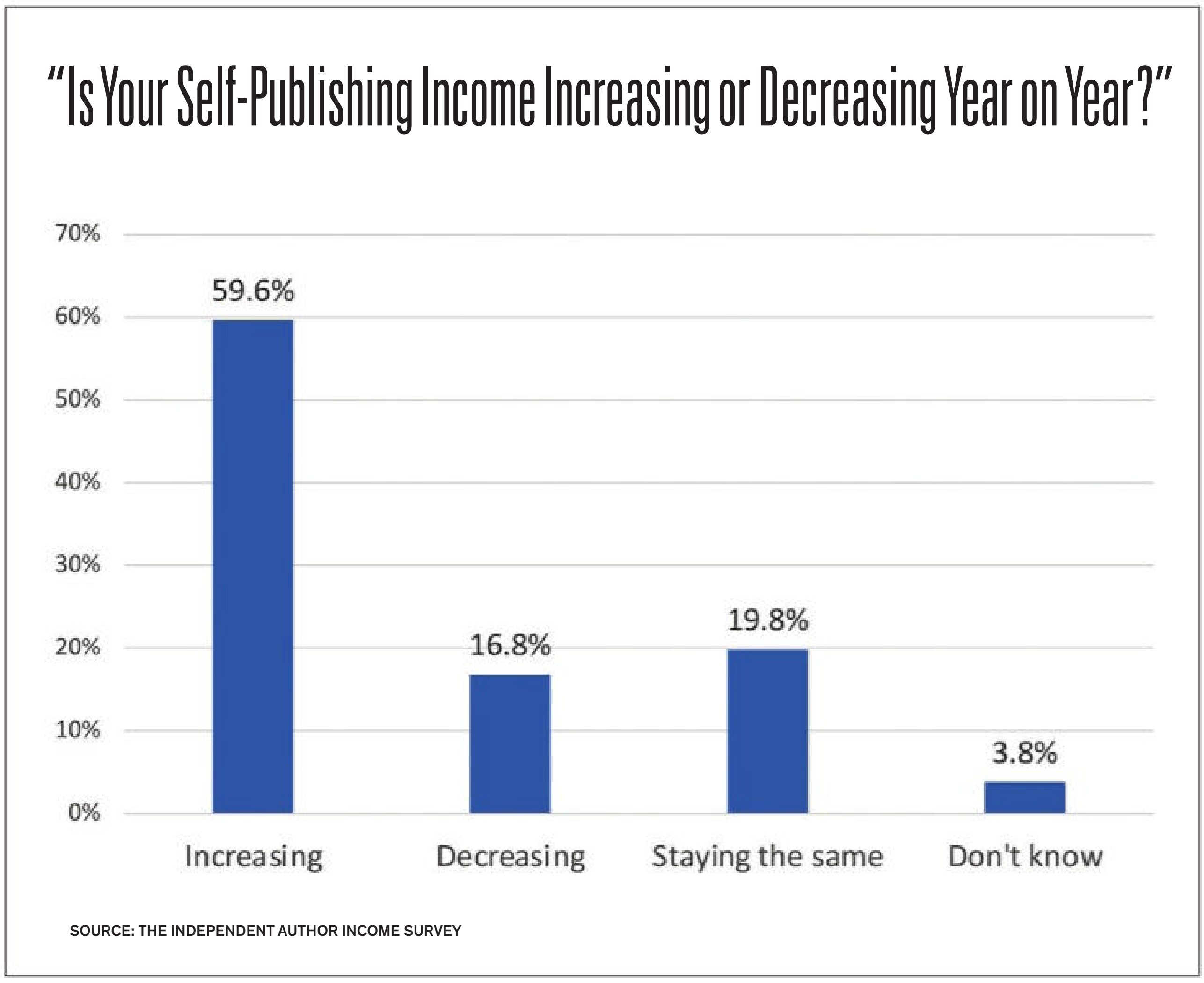
had released their first book between 2020 and 2022, while 60% reported publishing their first book in the 2015–2022 period. And many independent authors are prolific: over half who responded to the survey had published more than 10 books, and 20% had published more than 30. Romance, fantasy/sci-fi/speculative, and crime/thriller/detective were the genres in which independent authors were primarily engaged, with 57% of respondents working in them.

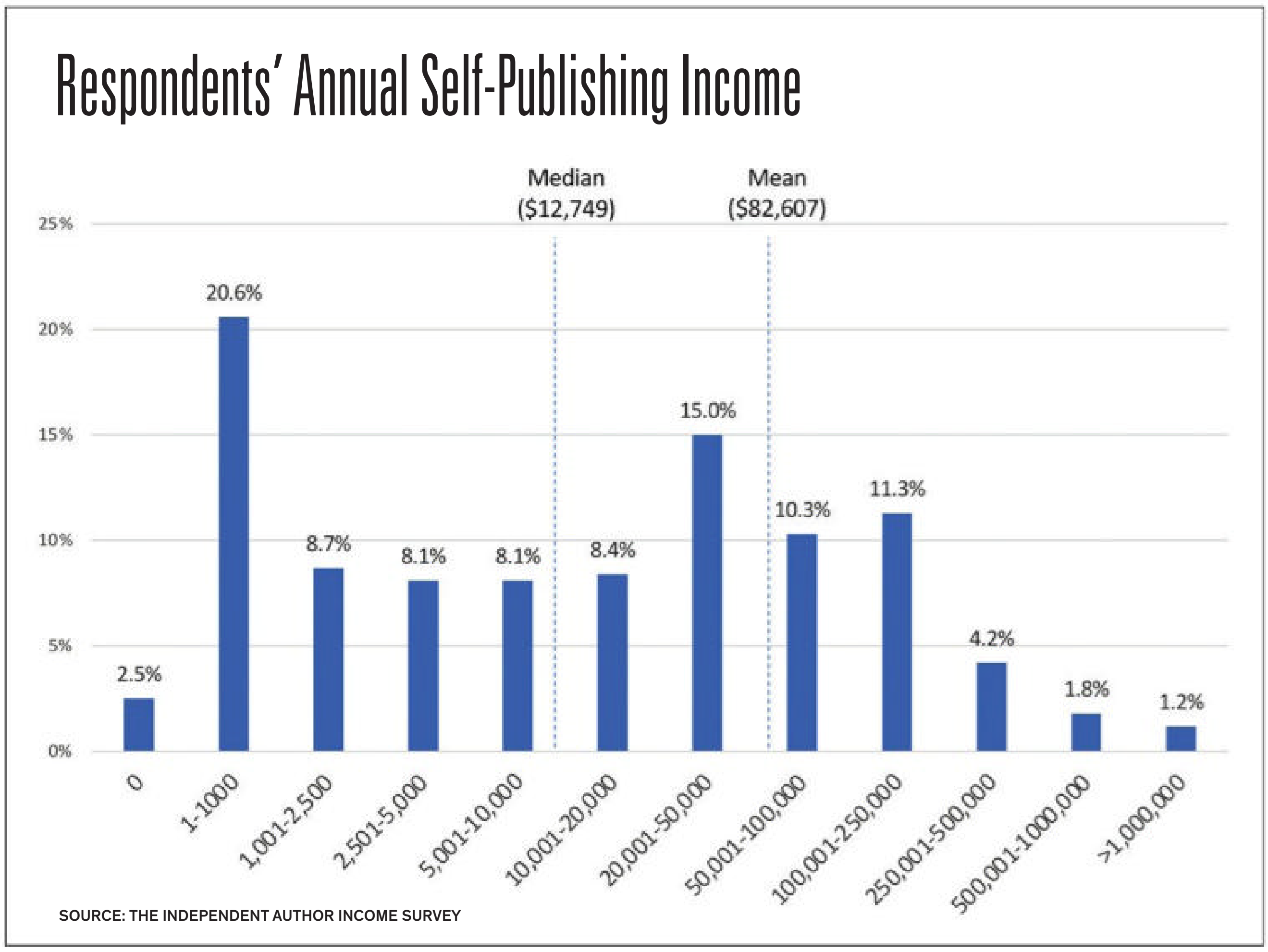
In terms of format, 95% of respondents publish e-books, and 88% use print-on-demand to publish print titles (offset printing was used by only 5%). Audiobooks were produced by 45% of responding authors.


“Is Your Self-Publishing Income Increasing or Decreasing Year on Year?”

SOURCE: THE INDEPENDENT AUTHOR INCOME SURVEY

Though ALLi is based in the U.K., the survey went to indie authors in all major English-speaking countries, with about 52% of respondents in the U.S. and 21% in the U.K. About 2,200 authors responded to the survey. More than 90% reported being 35 or older, and 43% were 55 or older. The vast majority, 81%, are college graduates.

ALLi director Orna Ross said she believes the results of the survey show that self-publishing is a viable option for authors, and that writers know that, if they do the work, they can make a living as an independent author.


Respondents’ Annual Self-Publishing Income

SOURCE: THE INDEPENDENT AUTHOR INCOME SURVEY

Melissa Addey, ALLi’s campaigns manager, said she hopes the results will spur the literary establishment to include indie authors in all of its various initiatives. Since its inception in 2012, ALLi has campaigned for schools and universities, literary festivals and events, bookshops and bestseller lists, and awards and reviewing outlets to open up to indie authors. “More than a decade on, it’s sad to see how little has changed in most quarters,” she added. “It’s time for literary organizations to wake up to the realities of how authors work and earn in the 2020s, and do right by all authors.” **—Jim Milliot**

DEALS

By Rachel Deahl

DEAL OF THE WEEK

New Yousafzai Memoir Goes to Atria

© TRACY NGUYEN

Yousafzai

Kate Napolitano, executive editor at Atria Books, acquired North American, audio, and serial rights to a new memoir from **Malala Yousafzai**, the Nobel Peace Prize winner and author of the bestseller *I Am Malala*. Atria described the book as a "revealing journey of self-discovery—a breathtaking story of recovery and search for identity, a candid exploration of her coming-of-age in the public spotlight, and an intimate look at her life today." A young readers and a picture book adaptation of the memoir will be published by Salaam Reads, another Simon & Schuster imprint. **Albert Lee** and **Meredith Miller** at UTA represented Yousafzai.

Crown Buys Shakur Bio

Robinson

Crown's **Kevin Doughten** bought North American rights to *Tupac Shakur: The Authorized Biography* from **Jeff Silberman** at Folio Literary Management. Screenwriter and author **Staci Robinson** knew Shakur in high school in Marin City, Calif., and was selected by Shakur's mother to write the book. It will be illustrated with photos, mementos, handwritten poetry and musings, and other rarely seen artifacts and images from the Shakur estate's archives. Crown called the bio "a moving exploration" of the rapper's life and legacy. Publication is set for October.

Flatiron Takes Pearson's Adult Debut

Pearson

Sarah Barley at Flatiron Books acquired world English rights to *The Courting of Bristol Keats*, the adult debut of bestselling YA author **Mary E. Pearson**, as part of a two-book deal for six figures. Flatiron said the novel "follows a grieving young woman who learns that her father's death may have been faked, and is plunged into an unexpected world of gods, fae, and monsters." **Rosemary Stimola** and **Allison Remcheck** of Stimola Literary Studio represented Pearson.

'Assassins' Head to Putnam

© MICHAEL MCWEENEY

Hart

Mark Tavani at G.P. Putnam's Sons preempted North American rights to *Assassins Anonymous* by **Rob Hart** (*The Warehouse*) in a two-book deal. The novel, Tavani said, features the world's deadliest hit man who, after putting his violent life behind him to join a 12-step support group for reformed assassins, risks everything to find out who has tried to kill him. Tavani added that *Assassins Anonymous* "blends the pulse-pounding action of *John Wick* with the humor and humanity of *Barry*." The deal was made by **Josh Getzler** at HG Literary.

Portfolio Adds 'Capital'

© SOULCAST MEDIA

Chen

In an auction, **Megan McCormack** at Portfolio bought North American rights to **Jessica Chen**'s *Quiet Capital*. An Emmy winner for her work at ABC 10News in San Diego, Calif., Chen is now CEO of Soulcast Media, a global business communication training agency, which works with companies and individuals on executive presence and communication. **Rachel Ekstrom Courage** of Courage Literary brokered the deal, and she said *Quiet Capital* "explores a new way of building visibility and influence in a loud world. Think *Quiet* meets *Radical Candor*."

Chancy Weaves Her Way to Tin House

Chancy

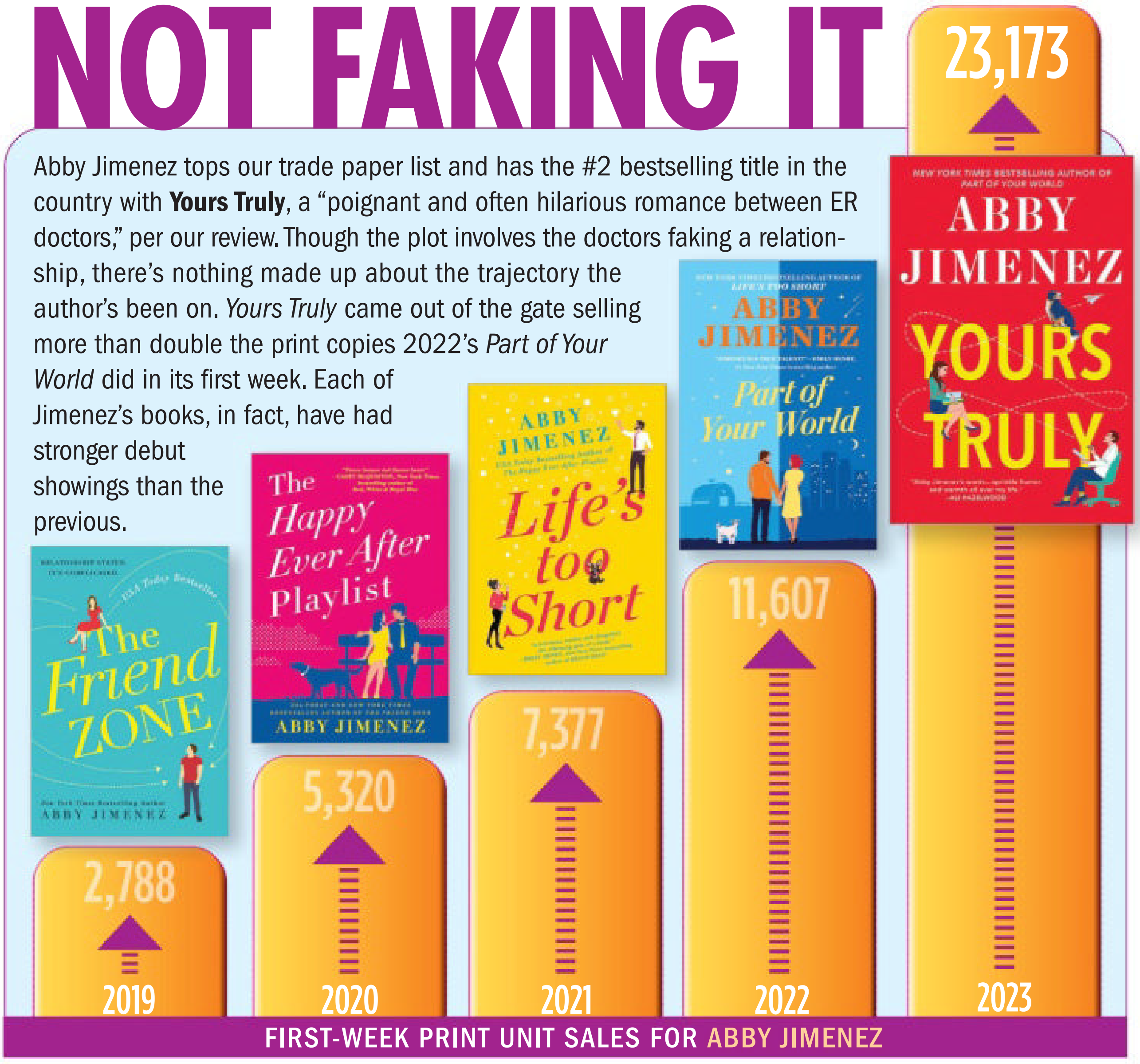
American Book Award winner **Myriam J.A. Chancy** (*What Storm, What Thunder*) sold U.S. rights to her new novel *Village Weavers* to **Masie Cochran** at Tin House, in a deal done by **Dara Hyde** at Hill Nadell Literary Agency. The novel, Hyde said, "follows the intertwining lives of young girls into their young adulthood in Port-au-Prince and their reconnection as elderly women in the United States to finally confront the revelation that separated them in childhood." Publication is set for winter 2024.

Behind the Bestsellers APR. 9–15, 2023

BY JONATHAN SEGURA

NOT FAKING IT

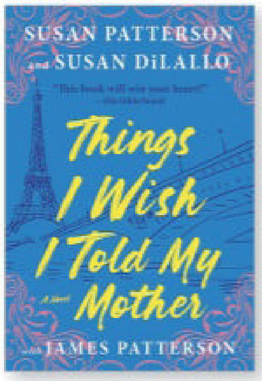
Abby Jimenez tops our trade paper list and has the #2 bestselling title in the country with **Yours Truly**, a "poignant and often hilarious romance between ER doctors," per our review. Though the plot involves the doctors faking a relationship, there's nothing made up about the trajectory the author's been on. *Yours Truly* came out of the gate selling more than double the print copies 2022's *Part of Your World* did in its first week. Each of Jimenez's books, in fact, have had stronger debut showings than the previous.



FIRST-WEEK PRINT UNIT SALES FOR ABBY JIMENEZ

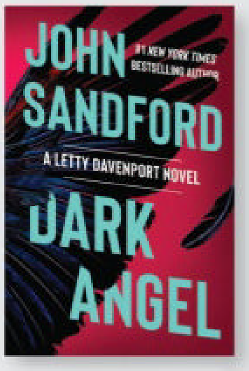
All in the Family

It's fairly common to see the name Patterson appear multiple times on our weekly bestseller charts, though this week the formula's changed up a little. **Things I Wish I Told My Mother**, in at #3 on our hardcover fiction list, is by Susan Patterson, with an assist from humor columnist Susan DiLallo and Patterson's husband, perennial bestseller James. The novel, about a mother and daughter's emotionally fraught jaunt across Europe, is a "feel-good story" that "makes a convincing case for the importance of familial love," according to *PW*'s review.


Susan Patterson and Susan DiLallo
Things I Wish I Told My Mother
James Patterson

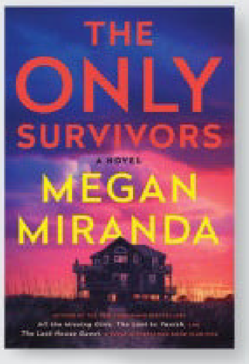
NEW & NOTABLE

DARK ANGEL
John Sandford
#1 Hardcover Fiction, #4 Overall



Investigator Letty Davenport returns in the sequel to 2022's *The Investigator*. "Sandford keeps his foot on the gas throughout, without stretching plausibility too far," per *PW*'s review.

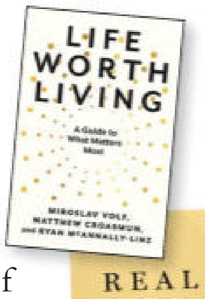
THE ONLY SURVIVORS
Megan Miranda
#11 Hardcover Fiction

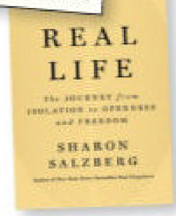


The survivors of a horrific accident meet up at a secluded beach house 10 years afterward, and things go very badly. Our review called this one an "evocative excursion into darkness."

Live Your Best Life

Two titles new to our nonfiction list take different approaches to getting past obstacles and finding happiness. In the #10 slot is **Life Worth Living**, by Miroslav Volf, Matthew Croasmun, and Ryan McAnnally-Linz, based on the wildly popular multidisciplinary class of the same name the trio teach at Yale. Two places below, renowned meditation teacher Sharon Salzberg's **Real Life** draws on Buddhist principles as it explains the virtues of creating an "expansion mindset."





TOP 10 OVERALL

RANK	TITLE	AUTHOR	IMPRINT	UNITS
1	**Twenty Thousand Fleas Under the Sea** (Dog Man #11)	Dav Pilkey	Graphix	60,253
2	**Yours Truly**	Abby Jimenez	Forever	23,173
3	**The Last Thing He Told Me**	Laura Dave	S&S/Rucci	22,112
4	**Dark Angel**	John Sandford	Putnam	21,885
5	**It Ends with Us**	Colleen Hoover	Atria	21,517
6	**It Starts with Us**	Colleen Hoover	Atria	21,356
7	**Oh, the Places You'll Go!**	Dr. Seuss	Random House	19,694
8	**Atomic Habits**	James Clear	Avery	19,569
9	**The Seven Husbands of Evelyn Hugo**	Taylor Jenkins Reid	Washington Square	15,895
10	**Never Never**	Hoover/Fisher	Canary Street	15,814

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Hardcover Frontlist Fiction

RANK	LW	TITLE	AUTHOR	IMPRINT	ISBN	UNITS
1	–	**Dark Angel**	John Sandford	Putnam	9780593422410	21,885
2	–	**Lassiter**	J.R. Ward	Gallery	9781982180027	10,528
3	–	**Things I Wish I Told My Mother**	Patterson/DiLallo	Little, Brown	9780316406208	8,907
4	5	**Hello Beautiful**	Ann Napolitano	Dial	9780593243732	8,726
5	3	**Hang the Moon**	Jeannette Walls	Scribner	9781501117299	8,683
6	4	**Tomorrow, and Tomorrow, and Tomorrow**	Gabrielle Zevin	Knopf	9780593321201	8,663
7	2	**Homecoming**	Kate Morton	Mariner	9780063020894	7,079
8	7	**Romantic Comedy**	Curtis Sittenfeld	Random House	9780399590948	6,896
9	6	**Countdown**	Patterson/DuBois	Little, Brown	9780316457378	6,803
10	9	**I Will Find You**	Harlan Coben	Grand Central	9781538748367	6,308
11	–	**The Only Survivors**	Megan Miranda	S&S/Rucci	9781668010419	5,800
12	15	**Remarkably Bright Creatures**	Shelby Van Pelt	Ecco	9780063204157	4,870
13	12	**Demon Copperhead**	Barbara Kingsolver	Harper	9780063251922	4,728
14	10	**Pineapple Street**	Jenny Jackson	Pamela Dorman	9780593490693	4,421
15	11	**Teenage Mutant Ninja Turtles: The Last Ronin**	Eastman/Laird et al.	IDW	9781684058419	3,887
16	8	**Tress of the Emerald Sea**	Brandon Sanderson	Tor	9781250899651	3,554
17	14	**Loyalty**	Lisa Scottoline	Putnam	9780525539803	3,552
18	19	**Mad Honey**	Picoult/Boylan	Ballantine	9781984818386	3,548
19	13	**Worthy Opponents**	Danielle Steel	Delacorte	9781984821805	3,544
20	16	**Storm Watch**	C.J. Box	Putnam	9780593331309	3,372

Hardcover Frontlist Nonfiction

RANK	LW	TITLE	AUTHOR	IMPRINT	ISBN	UNITS
1	1	**Outlive**	Peter Attia	Harmony	9780593236598	15,102
2	–	**Truly Simple**	Kristin Cavallari	Rodale	9780593578780	14,056
3	2	**The Wisdom of the Bullfrog**	William H. Mcraven	Grand Central	9781538707944	13,094
4	14	**The Return of the Gods**	Jonathan Cahn	Frontline	9781636411422	10,310
5	7	**I'm Glad My Mom Died**	Jennette McCurdy	Simon & Schuster	9781982185824	7,829
6	3	**The Love Stories of the Bible Speak**	Shannon Bream	Broadside	9780063226050	7,787
7	–	**You Could Make This Place Beautiful**	Maggie Smith	One Signal	9781982185855	7,634
8	4	**You're Going to Make It**	Lysa Terkeurst	Thomas Nelson	9781400239085	7,324
9	10	**The Creative Act**	Rick Rubin	Penguin Press	9780593652886	7,176
10	–	**Life Worth Living**	Miroslav Volf et al.	Open Field	9780593489307	6,726
11	–	**Get Trump**	Alan Dershowitz	Hot Books	9781510777811	6,228
12	–	**Real Life**	Sharon Salzberg	Flatiron	9781250835734	6,188
13	5	**Built to Move**	Starrett/Starrett	Knopf	9780593534809	5,915
14	9	**Spare**	Prince Harry	Random House	9780593593806	5,845
15	8	**Got Your Number**	Mike Greenberg	Hyperion Avenue	9781368073561	4,778
16	12	**Poverty, By America**	Matthew Desmond	Crown	9780593239919	4,583
17	–	**I Swear**	Katie Porter	Crown	9780593443989	3,823
18	16	**Follow Me to Hell**	Tom Clavin	St Martin's	9781250214553	3,388
19	–	**It. Goes. So. Fast.**	Mary Louise Kelly	Holt	9781250859853	3,359
20	–	**Turning Small Talk into Big Talk**	Jan Janura	Forefront	9781637631195	3,343

LW: rank last week

Adult Bestsellers | APR. 9–15, 2023

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Mass Market Frontlist

RANK	LW	TITLE	AUTHOR	IMPRINT	ISBN	UNITS
1	1	Two Alone	Sandra Brown	Mira	9780778334446	3,955
2	4	The Russian	Patterson/Born	Grand Central	9781538703588	3,855
3	2	Suspects	Danielle Steel	Dell	9781984821706	3,704
4	7	Legacy	Nora Roberts	St Martin's	9781250775009	3,050
5	5	The Jensens of Colorado	Johnstone/Johnstone	Pinnacle	9780786050130	2,752
6	8	Death of the Black Widow	Patterson/Barker	Grand Central	9781538753088	2,568
7	6	Save It for Sunday	Johnstone/ Johnstone	Pinnacle	9780786049578	2,509
8	11	Mercy	David Baldacci	Grand Central	9781538719718	2,235
9	12	Tom Clancy: Zero Hour	Don Bentley	Berkley	9780593422748	2,051
10	10	Wrangling the Rancher	Diana Palmer	Harlequin	9781335498557	1,933
11	13	Getting Even	Lisa Jackson	Zebra	9781420155549	1,901
12	24	The Last House Guest	Megan Miranda	S&S/Rucci	9781668012796	1,881
13	14	Ready for Marriage	Debbie Macomber	Harlequin	9781335498410	1,862
14	19	Then You Came Along	Debbie Macomber	Mira	9780778386131	1,815
15	25	Someday with You	Nora Roberts	Silhouette	9781335452795	1,759
16	26	One Night	Debbie Macomber	Avon	9780061081859	1,681
17	9	Shielding the Baby	Laura Scott	Love Inspired Suspense	9781335587626	1,659
18	15	Forever	J.R. Ward	Pocket	9781982180201	1,598
19	27	The Inheritance	Joann Ross	HQN	9781335623942	1,593
20	28	Beautiful	Danielle Steel	Dell	9781984821669	1,507

Trade Paperback Frontlist

RANK	LW	TITLE	AUTHOR	IMPRINT	ISBN	UNITS
1	–	Yours Truly	Abby Jimenez	Forever	9781538704394	23,173
2	3	The Last Thing He Told Me	Laura Dave	S&S/Rucci	9781501171352	22,112
3	1	It Starts with Us	Colleen Hoover	Atria	9781668001226	21,356
4	2	Never Never	Hoover/Fisher	Canary Street	9781335004888	15,814
5	–	Kaiju No. 8, Vol. 6	Naoya Matsumoto	Viz	9781974736331	12,313
6	4	Heart Bones	Colleen Hoover	Atria	9781668021910	12,153
7	–	Super Shortcut Instant Pot	Jeffrey Eisner	Voracious	9780316485234	11,740
8	8	Things We Hide from the Light	Lucy Score	Bloom	9781728276113	9,657
9	7	Twisted Love	Ana Huang	Bloom	9781728274867	9,632
10	5	Icebreaker	Hannah Grace	Atria	9781668026038	9,235
11	11	The Housemaid	Freida Mcfadden	Grand Central	9781538742570	8,870
12	10	Crying in H Mart	Michelle Zauner	Vintage	9781984898951	8,365
13	9	The Four Winds	Kristin Hannah	Griffin	9781250178619	8,198
14	–	My Dress-Up Darling 8	Shinichi Fukuda	Square Enix Manga	9781646091652	6,765
15	–	Run, Rose, Run	Patterson/Parton	Grand Central	9781538723968	6,741
16	18	The Summer Place	Jennifer Weiner	Washington Square	9781501133589	6,680
17	–	The Invisible Life of Addie LaRue	V.E. Schwab	Tor	9780765387578	6,518
18	38	Tiny Beautiful Things	Cheryl Strayed	Vintage	9780593685211	6,486
19	13	The It Girl	Ruth Ware	Scout	9781982155278	6,453
20	14	Twisted Games	Ana Huang	Bloom	9781728274874	6,441

LW: rank last week

Children's Bestsellers | APR. 9–15, 2023

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Children's Frontlist Fiction

RANK	TITLE	AUTHOR	IMPRINT	ISBN	UNITS
1	**Twenty Thousand Fleas Under the Sea** (Dog Man #11)	Dav Pilkey	Graphix	9781338801910	60,253
2	**Collaborations** (Cat Kid Comic Club #4)	Dav Pilkey	Graphix	9781338846621	5,824
3	**Diper Överlöde** (Diary of a Wimpy Kid #17)	Jeff Kinney	Amulet	9781419762949	5,080
4	**Better Than the Movies**	Lynn Painter	Simon & Schuster	9781534467637	4,731
5	**Moon Rising** (Wings of Fire Graphic Novel #6)	Sutherland/Holmes	Graphix	9781338730890	4,130
6	**As Good as Dead**	Holly Jackson	Ember	9780593379882	4,066
7	**The Adventures of Captain Underpants** (anniv. ed.)	Dav Pilkey	Scholastic	9781338865394	4,015
8	**The Island**	Natasha Preston	Delacorte	9780593481493	3,852
9	**Mary Anne's Bad Luck Mystery** (The Baby-Sitters Club Graphic Novel #13)	Martin/Cheng	Graphix	9781338616101	3,800
10	**The Princess in Black and the Prince in Pink**	Hale/Hale/Pham	Candlewick	9781536209785	3,720
11	**School Trip**	Jerry Craft	Quill Tree	9780062885531	3,679
12	**Five Nights at Freddy's** (Fazbear Frights Graphic Novel Collection #2)	Scott Cawthon	Graphix	9781338792706	3,605
13	**One of Us Is Lying**	Karen M. McManus	Delacorte	9781524714758	3,539
14	**The Little Mermaid: Against the Tide**	J. Elle	Disney Press	9781368077224	3,016
15	**Kill Joy**	Holly Jackson	Delacorte	9780593426210	2,893
16	**Five Nights at Freddy's** (Fazbear Frights Graphic Novel Collection #1)	Scott Cawthon	Graphix	9781338792676	2,788
17	**When You Wish upon a Star** (Twisted Tale #14)	Elizabeth Lim	Disney-Hyperion	9781368077545	2,773
18	**The Hawthorne Legacy**	Jennifer Lynn Barnes	Little, Brown	9780316105187	2,716
19	**On Purpose** (Cat Kid Comic Club #3)	Dav Pilkey	Graphix	9781338801941	2,482
20	**Once upon a Broken Heart**	Stephanie Garber	Flatiron	9781250268402	2,436
21	**Karen's Birthday** (Baby-Sitters Little Sister Graphic Novel #6)	Martin/Farina	Graphix	9781338762587	2,298
22	**You'd Be Home Now**	Kathleen Glasgow	Ember	9780525708070	2,286
23	**The Mary Shelley Club**	Goldy Moldavsky	Square Fish	9781250821232	2,227
24	**Five Survive**	Holly Jackson	Delacorte	9780593374160	2,061
25	**Are You There God? It's Me, Margaret** (media tie-in)	Judy Blume	Atheneum	9781665921312	2,033

Children's Picture Books

RANK	TITLE	AUTHOR	IMPRINT	ISBN	UNITS
1	**Oh, the Places You'll Go!**	Dr. Seuss	Random House	9780679805274	19,694
2	**The Very Hungry Caterpillar**	Eric Carle	Philomel	9780399226908	12,202
3	**Brown Bear, Brown Bear, What Do You See?**	Martin/Carle	Holt	9780805047905	10,738
4	**I Love You to the Moon and Back**	Hepworth/Warnes	Tiger Tales	9781589255517	7,894
5	**One Fish Two Fish Red Fish Blue Fish**	Dr. Seuss	Random House	9780394800134	7,829
6	**Goodnight Moon**	Brown/Hurd	HarperFestival	9780694003617	7,360
7	**Guess How Much I Love You**	McBratney/Jeram	Candlewick	9781536210637	6,882
8	**Green Eggs and Ham**	Dr. Seuss	Random House	9780394800165	6,601
9	**Kindergarten, Here I Come!**	Steinberg/Chambers	Grosset & Dunlap	9780448456249	6,434
10	**Chicka Chicka Boom Boom**	Martin/Archambault/Ehlert	Little Simon	9781442450707	6,262
11	**The Cat in the Hat**	Dr. Seuss	Random House	9780394800011	5,987
12	**I Love You Like No Otter**	Rossner/Hanson	Sourcebooks Wonderland	9781728213743	5,854
13	**The Night Before Kindergarten**	Wing/Durrell	Grosset & Dunlap	9780448425009	5,469
14	**You're My Little Cuddle Bug**	Edwards/Marshall	Silver Dolphin	9781684122585	5,073
15	**Love You Forever**	Munsch/McGraw	Firefly	9780920668375	4,654
16	**Little Blue Truck's Springtime**	Schertle/McElmurry	Clarion	9780544938090	4,629
17	**The Wonderful Things You Will Be**	Emily Winfield Martin	Random House	9780385376716	4,585
18	**Oh, Baby, the Places You'll Go!**	Seuss/Rabe	Random House	9780553520576	4,415
19	**Dr. Seuss's ABC**	Dr. Seuss	Random House	9780394800301	4,387
20	**Are You My Mother?**	P.D. Eastman	Random House	9780394800189	4,281
21	**5-Minute The Little Mermaid Stories**	N/A	Disney Press	9781368093255	4,154
22	**Go, Dog. Go!**	P.D. Eastman	Random House	9780394800202	3,963
23	**Dinosaur, Dinosaur, Say Good Night**	N/A	Tiger Tales	9781680105896	3,895
24	**If Animals Kissed Good Night**	Paul/Walker	FSG	9780374300210	3,884
25	**The Giving Tree**	Shel Silverstein	HarperCollins	9780060256654	3,816

Seeking the Spiritual Seekers

New faith-based books aim to draw in those looking outside of doctrinal religions for meaning in life

By Cathy Lynn Grossman

For three decades, surveys have asked people about their religious identity. Each time, more people —now 29% of U.S. adults—check “none,” according to Pew Research. Yet, many of these “nones” are searching for spiritual meaning, and faith-based publishers are here to help. Upcoming books highlight a kaleidoscopic range of personalized religious, spiritual, and philosophical pathways—and a defense of atheism, as well. Authors are drawing from their own inner journeys or tracing the travels of others as varied as singer Tina Turner, a Baptist turned Buddhist; 12th-century Jewish sage Maimonides; transcendentalist Ralph Waldo Emerson; and actor Rainn Wilson, a Baha’i believer.

Brant Rumble, editorial director for Hachette Books, points to Wilson’s *Soul Boom: Why We Need a Spiritual Revolution* (Apr.) as an example of ways titles could reach the nones demographic. “This is an extremely big-tent book about what it can mean to be spiritual, and how the common dimensions of spirituality can help heal what ails us, individually and as a society,” Rumble says. (For our q&a with Wilson, see “Rainn Wilson Goes Boom,” p. 23.)

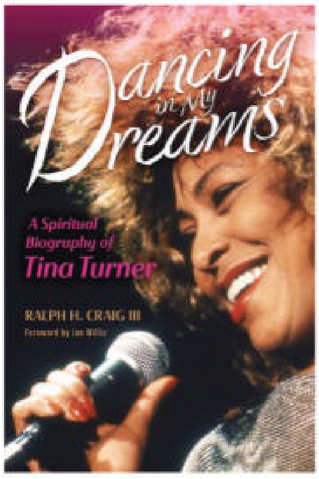
Broadleaf Books acquiring editor Valerie Weaver-Zercher says nones and “dones” may be drawn to books that defy easy categorization. They may feel “out of step with books by Christian presses, which they sense may be trying to evangelize them,” she adds. “They may also feel ignored by irreligious publishers, which aren’t aware that many spiritual-but-not-religious readers want to read books about Jesus or prayer or the Bible, just written in a different key.”

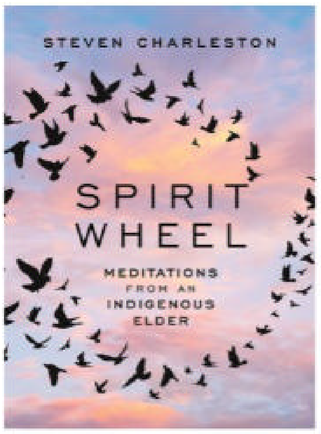
Weaver-Zercher cites, for example, *Spirit Wheel: Meditations from an Indigenous Elder* (July), by Choctaw Nation elder and Episcopal priest Steven Charleston, which introduces readers to envisioning “the four directions that ground Native spirituality: tradition, kinship, vision, and balance.”

Lisa Kloskin, another Broadleaf acquiring editor, mentions *Holy Runaways: Rediscovering Faith After Being Burned by Religion* (Oct.) by psychotherapist Matthias Roberts, who also hosts *Queerology: A Podcast on Belief and Being*. Roberts isn’t capitalizing on a trend but rather is writing from personal experience so readers can join on a “journey to a spirituality that is more life-giving,” Kloskin says.

Tales and trails of transformation

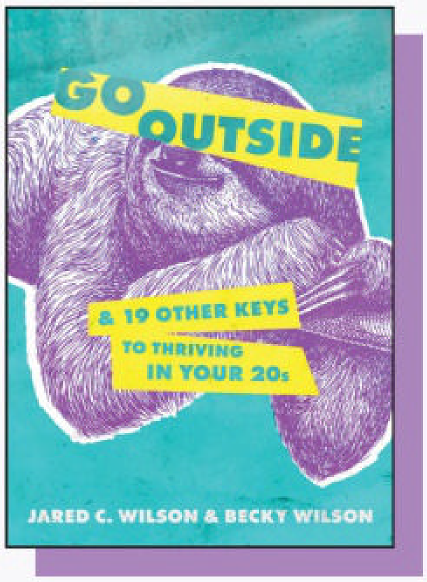
Religious studies expert Ralph H. Craig III follows the movements of American religion and pop culture through *Dancing in My Dreams: A Spiritual Biography of Tina Turner* (Eerdmans, Nov.). The rock ’n’ roll icon moved away from the Black Baptist church of her youth through new age influences in the 1960s to find “wisdom and power” in Soka Gakkai, a Japanese Buddhist movement.





Readers are interested in authentic voices—authors who are “charting their own courses and relating their experiences in a clear and inspirational way,” says Joel Fotinos, v-p and editorial director at St. Martin’s Essentials. Among St. Martin’s upcoming spirituality books is *I’m Ascending, Now What? Awaken Your Authentic Self, Own Your Power, Embody Your Truth* (June), in which author Sydney Campos writes, “What if being human is actually the ultimate spiritual experience—and enlightenment is simply being our true selves?” Campos then offers a series of steps toward self-discovery.

Spiritual transformation books are so popular with the nones that Diana


GO OUTSIDE
& 19 OTHER KEYS TO THRIVING IN YOUR 20s
JARED C. WILSON & BECKY WILSON

In Go Outside, Jared and Becky Wilson imagine the advice they’d give if they could travel back in time. After 25 years of marriage, the Wilsons provide vital words of wisdom and encouragement to make the season of your youth a time of joy and fruitful investment in the future.

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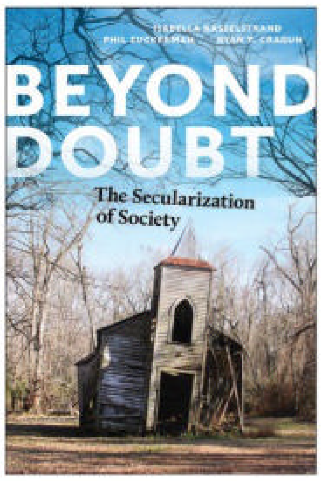
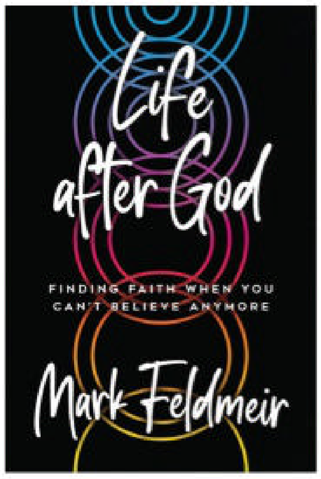
Ventimiglia, executive editor at Sounds True, says, "In a way, I think this audience is the backbone of our company." For example, Sounds True is planning a 60,000-copy first printing for *Travel Light: Spiritual Minimalism to Live a More Fulfilled Life* (July) by meditation and spiritual teacher Light Watkins. More important than cleaning out your closet is "decluttering your choices and values and life," he writes. Ventimiglia says that "doing the inner work, seeking purpose, etc., extends beyond organized religion. You don't need to believe in God or attend synagogue to experience personal growth and healing."

Secularism and atheism have also drawn publishers' attention, with titles such as *Rise of the Nones: The Importance of Science & Freedom from Religion* (Hypathia, Aug.) by Adam Neiblum, a frequent writer on atheism. David G. McAfee, cofounder of the press, says he will promote Neiblum's book through social media, "where atheists have seen huge success in getting an extremely stigmatized and relatively unpopular idea—that there are no deities—to be palatable to the masses." *Beyond Doubt: The Secularization of Society* (New York Univ., May) details the detachment from organized religion in modern and modernizing regions around the globe. It's written by three sociology professors: Isabella Kasselstrand at the University of Aberdeen, Phil Zuckerman at Pitzer College, and Ryan T. Cragun at the University of Tampa.



People may be leaving religion, but not all of them are walking—or running—away from God. Westminster John Knox offers Methodist pastor Mark Feldmeir's *Life After God: Finding Faith When You Can't Believe Anymore* (Aug.), which encourages people to open themselves to "the mystery, wonder, and compelling love we crave," according to the publisher. *Devotions for People Who Don't Do Devotions* (Sept.), by Episcopal priest and Clergy Confidential blogger Tim Schenck, uses the format to help people recognize and reflect on "God's hand at work in both the mundane and miraculous day-to-day interactions of our lives," according to Forward Movement, the publisher.



Those who claim no religion in research surveys are "rarely ever completely disentangled from Christianity," says Jessica Miller Kelley, senior acquisitions editor for WJK. "We're seeking to meet their needs whether they are still working through the baggage of a toxic religious upbringing, seeking truth and beauty without doctrine, or engaging social problems that are intertwined with ways religion has been manifest in our history."

In WJK's September title *Every Step Is Home: A Spiritual*

130 years of publishing books that enlighten and inspire the development of spiritual thinking and change lives.

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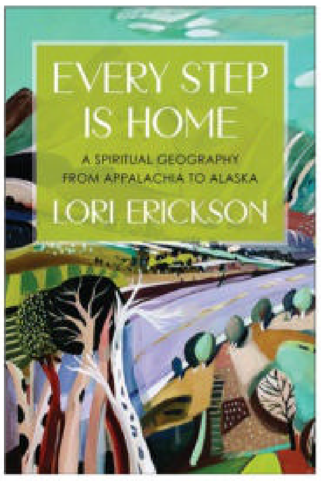
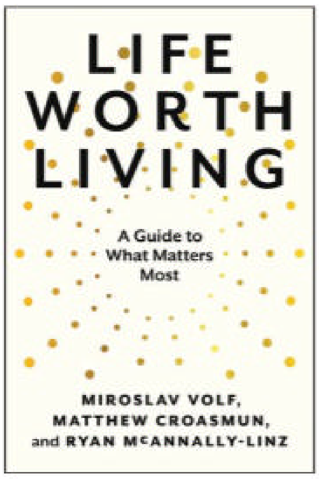
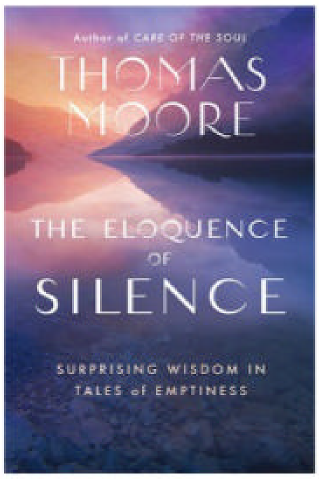
Geography from Appalachia to Alaska, travel writer Lori Erickson, who specializes in spiritual journeys, reflects on human-made and natural wonders that have held sacred meaning to people for centuries.

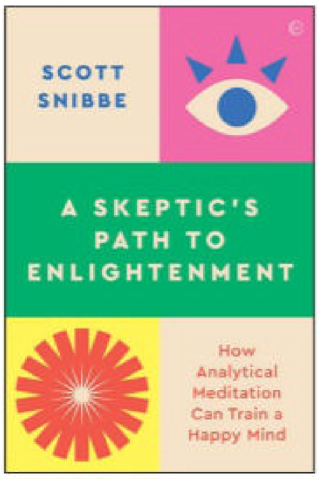
To write *Mother, Nature: A 5,000-Mile Journey to Discover If a Mother and Son Can Survive Their Differences* (Nov.), *Wilderness Magazine* executive editor Jedidiah Jenkins and his mother, Barbara Jenkins, retraced the route she traveled with his father for their 1970s books *A Walk Across America* and *A Walk West*. Along the way, Jedidiah, a 40-year-old gay mystic, and Barbara, a 70-year-old conservative evangelical, mend their spiritual and personal rifts, according to Convergent, the publisher.


EVERY STEP IS HOME
A SPIRITUAL GEOGRAPHY FROM APPALACHIA TO ALASKA
LORI ERICKSON

The famous *X-Files* tagline was, "The truth is out there." Now, many spiritual writers contend that the truth can be found within. In *Life Worth Living: A Guide to What Matters Most* (The Open Field, out now), three scholars based at Yale Divinity School's Center for Faith & Culture—Miroslav Volf, Matthew Croasmun, and Ryan McAnnally-Linz—argue that a vision of a good life can be seen by searching one's own life for the underlying truth. In *The Gentle Art of Spiritual Discernment: A Guide to Discovering Your Personal Path* (Inner Traditions, July), sociologist and social justice activist Pierre Pradervand writes that a spiritual quest requires living with integrity and generosity. To write *The Eloquence of Silence: Surprising Wisdom in Tales of Emptiness* (New World Library, May), psychotherapist and former monk Thomas Moore considers spiritual traditions, folktales, literature, and his own life to explore how spaces of emptiness and silence can open the eyes and the soul.


LIFE WORTH LIVING
A Guide to What Matters Most
MIROSLAV VOLF, MATTHEW CROASMUN, and RYAN McANNALLY-LINZ

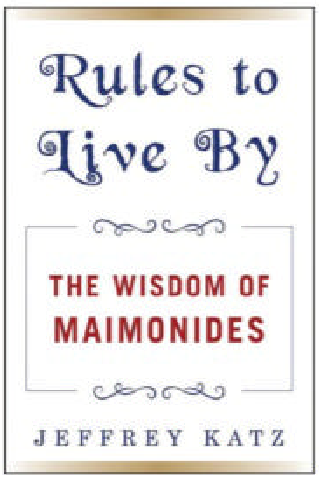

Author of CARE OF THE SOUL
THOMAS MOORE
THE ELOQUENCE OF SILENCE
SURPRISING WISDOM IN TALES of EMPTINESS


SCOTT SNIBBE
A SKEPTIC'S PATH TO ENLIGHTENMENT
How Analytical Meditation Can Train a Happy Mind

Contemporary views of ancient traditions

Other authors go back in time to offer today's seekers new spins on the wisdom found in Buddhist, Jewish, and transcendentalist visions of the spiritual life.

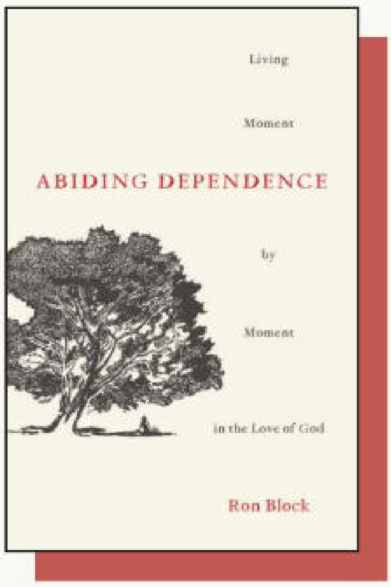
In *Rules to Live By: The Wisdom of Maimonides* (Humanix, Aug.), Jeffrey Katz, who teaches rationalist religious philosophy, shows how guidelines and values Maimonides found in the Torah can offer timeless strategies for honorable, healthy living. Mark Matousek, a prolific author and founder of The Seekers Forum, a space for nonsectarian spiritual dialogue online, revisits the impact of Emerson's transcendentalism to find messages for modern readers in *Lessons from an American Stoic: How Emerson Can Change Your Life* (Harper One, June).


Rules to Live By
THE WISDOM OF MAIMONIDES
JEFFREY KATZ

Three upcoming books take distinctive approaches to Buddhism. Meditation teacher and author Sah D'Simone, host of the podcast *The Spiritually Sassy Show*, merges ideas from tantric Buddhism and contemplative approaches to psychotherapy for what he calls "Spiritually Sassy" techniques for seeking enlightenment and improving relationships in *Spiritually, We: The Art of Relating and Connecting from the Heart* (Sounds True, Dec.).

Christopher Wallis, founder of Tantra Illuminated, an online learning portal for his courses and teachings, writes in *Near Enemies of the Truth: Avoid the Pitfalls of a Spiritual Life and Become Radically Free* (Wonderwell, Nov.) that Buddhism is too often reduced to "bumper-sticker platitudes." Wallis offers guided meditations and reflections to steer seekers back on track.

Scott Snibbe, who teaches secular forms of Tibetan Buddhism on multiple platforms, has turned his website and podcast *A Skeptic's Path to Enlightenment* into a book by the same name, coming from Watkins in December. Snibbe takes on popular "mindfulness" trends by teaching what he calls "analytical meditation," which, he writes, is based in utilizing science and psychology as pathways to enlightenment. ■


Living
Moment
ABIDING DEPENDENCE
by
Moment
in the Love of God
Ron Block

To become who we're meant to be requires a deeper experience of God Himself. Abiding Dependence shares forty days of meditations—a deep plunge into the beauty and richness of the Gospels. Learn to live and breathe in the atmosphere of God's abiding love.

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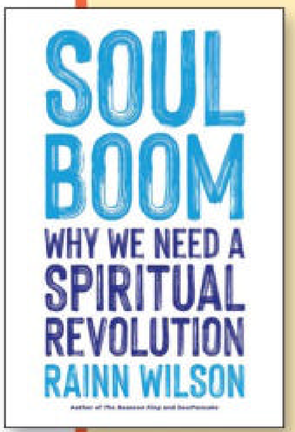
RAINN WILSON GOES BOOM


SOUL BOOM
WHY WE NEED A SPIRITUAL REVOLUTION
RAINN WILSON

Rainn Wilson, who played Dwight Shrute on the NBC sitcom *The Office*, takes a profound, humorous, reflective look at faith and spirituality in *Soul Boom: Why We Need a Spiritual Revolution* (Hachette Go, Apr.). Wilson, whose earlier books include *Soul PanCake: Chew on Life's Big Questions* and *The Bassoon King: My Life in Art, Faith, and Idiocy*, is fearless and funny in mining the world's religious and spiritual traditions—including the Baha'i faith by which he was raised—for nuggets of truth and wisdom.

PW talked with Wilson about his ambitious quest to inspire believers and unbelievers alike.

Why did you call this book *Soul Boom*?

Faith and spirituality can be perceived as soft and sentimental and hippy-dippy and airy-fairy and, frequently, self-help-y. I wanted to use words like *soul* and *spirituality*, but punch them up a little bit and to make this book feel like it was different, it had some humor, it had some spark, and it had something distinctive to say around these topics.

Who is the audience you have in mind for this book?

I would love for it to be enjoyed by born-again Christians and by atheists, by agnostics, by young people that are "spiritual but not religious," and everyone in between. I would love to provoke curiosity and discussions that put spiritual concepts and spiritual tools at the center. We need to, in a whole cloth way, completely reinvent and reimagine how we do pretty much everything.

How do you believe religion and spirituality inform each other?

Spirituality is those qualities of the divine that we all have within us that supersede, surpass, and transcend the mere physical. Religion is spirituality organized, so it's spirituality within a context. Religion can be destructive. It can be corrupt and hierarchical in really toxic ways. But by discarding religion, we've been losing something. At its very best, organized religion allows and builds community.

You reference spiritual teachers from scripture, religious history, and television shows like *Star Trek*. What makes a great spiritual teacher, and do you consider yourself to be one?

Yes, I am one of the great spiritual teachers of the age, and I have secured the domain name guru.com. In that, you'll just find my headshot and a cycling of my greatest tweets. [Laughs.] I think a great spiritual teacher is not a hypocrite. The Bible says, "You shall know them by their fruits. Be aware of false prophets." So, get to know their fruits.

How do you respond if someone says they're not spiritual at all, that spirituality has no relevance to their lives?

I would say that the fundamental building block of spirituality is love. So, if that person has love in their life, then they have spirituality in their life.

—Holly Lebowitz Rossi

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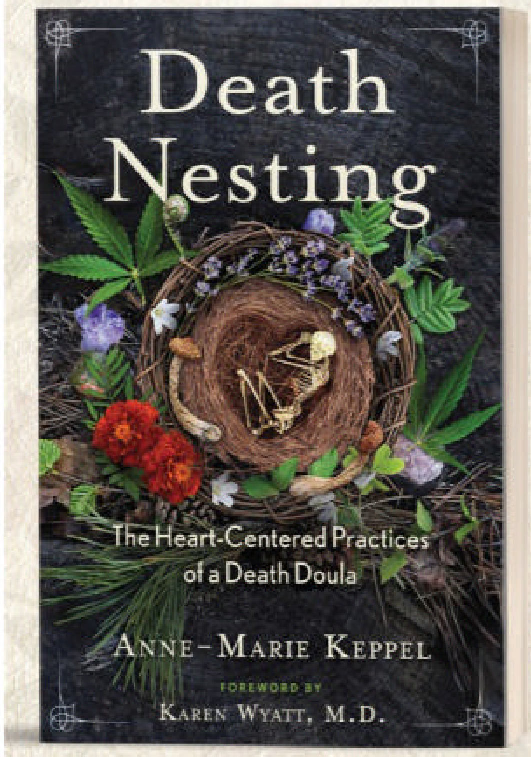

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The Stars My Destination

NEW BOOKS PUT THE MYSTERIES OF SPACE WITHIN REACH

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By Liz Scheier

Amid political division, a pandemic, and natural disasters aplenty, it's no wonder readers are looking to the stars. "I've found a lot of comfort in thinking about space in these last several years," says Norton editor Jessica Yao. "When life on Earth feels constrained and limited, space still feels open and possible." She's not alone: *PW* spoke with editors and authors whose forthcoming books depict the science and wonder of exploring a vast, ever-changing universe.

the
LITTLE BOOK
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EXOPLANETS
Joshua Winn
FOR THE
LOVE OF
MARS
MATTHEW
SHINDELL
A HUMAN HISTORY
OF THE RED PLANET

Boldly going where no telescope has gone before

Nearly every editor interviewed for this piece mentioned the James Webb telescope, whose infrared images of galaxies billions of light-years away have served as a gateway drug for the astronomy-curious. "The fact that we've put such an advanced telescope into space is huge," says Abigail Johnson, associate editor for the physical sciences at Princeton University Press. "When viewing from the ground, we can only see the part of the sky that the Earth is facing at nighttime, but a telescope in space gives us a wider field of view and can move around—it's a completely different vantage point."

The Little Book of Exoplanets (July) by Joshua Winn, professor of astrophysical sciences at Princeton University and a co-investigator in NASA's ongoing Transiting Exoplanet Survey Satellite mission, is the latest in a series of titles from Princeton University Press that survey emerging areas of physics and astronomy. Winn's guide to planets outside of Earth's solar system gives readers "a sense of our place in the universe," Johnson says. "We used to think Earth was all there was, until we found out that we're part of a whole system of planets, that our system is one of hundreds of thousands. With each discovery we learn how the Earth is and isn't unique; we've even found Earth-like planets like Kepler 2009 and TESS."

In *For the Love of Mars* (Univ. of Chicago, May), National Air and Space Museum curator Matthew Shindell describes efforts to understand a celestial body closer to home, tracing the red planet's evolution in the popular imagination.

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Celebrating 100 Books in the MIT Press's Essential Knowledge Series

The broad-ranging series, which provides fundamental basics on complex, pressing topics, is hitting a major milestone and looking to the future

The world offers no shortage of information. But weeding out all the untruths, dogma, and misinformation has never been more challenging than it is today. And that's where the Essential Knowledge series from the MIT Press comes in, with its focus on demystifying complex topics in the fields of philosophy, science, technology, linguistics, sociology, history, and more.

Gita Manaktala

And the series is poised to hit a significant milestone, with its 100th title slated for publication in 2024. "Since launching the Essential Knowledge series, we've thought and talked a lot about what exactly we mean by essential knowledge—essential to whom," says Gita Manaktala, editorial director at the MIT Press. "The publication of the 100th book gives us a chance to reflect on the many topics the series has unpacked for readers. It's also a chance to consider the future of the Essential Knowledge series and the topics we still want to cover."

With the 100th title hitting shelves next year, it's the perfect time to revisit the series' backlist and explore new releases—all written by top experts in their fields. Recent bestsellers and upcoming releases include *Machine Learning* by Ethem Alpaydin, *Post-Truth* by Lee McIntyre, *Robot Ethics* by Mark Coeckelbergh, *Whiteness* by Martin Lund, *Placebos* by Kathryn T. Hall, and *Gender(s)* by Kathryn Bond Stockton.

The editors of the Essential Knowledge series select topics based on what piques the curiosity of today's readers—and what personally interests them. "Our editors did a lot of brainstorming as we built the Essential Knowledge series pipeline," Manaktala says. "It's been fun to talk through the lists of topics that we ourselves were curious to know about, along with lists of the people we'd want to explain these things to us. Who can we gather for this dinner party? The invitation list is long and growing."

Each book in the series is an entirely original, commissioned work, which means that readers won't encounter repurposed content excerpted from previously published material. Each book undergoes a process of rigorous peer review, so readers can be confident that each installment in the series is vetted and accurate. The books are also periodically updated, ensuring that each title continues to be timely and germane. In addition to the valuable foundational knowledge each book offers, the titles feature striking cover art and are sleekly designed, making the books portable, giftable, and ideal for collecting.

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KATHRYN T. HALL

With so many books in the Essential Knowledge series, there are plenty of fascinating topics for readers to choose from. Philip Laughlin, senior acquisitions editor in the categories of cognitive science, philosophy, linguistics, and bioethics, is particularly excited about author John Shook's *Pragmatism*. It's an example of a topic that he says has become increasingly pertinent in recent years. "The topic was suggested to me years ago, but at the time, I didn't think it was intriguing enough to merit inclusion in the series," Laughlin says. "But that was before we saw the steady shift toward authoritarianism in global elections. And, as Richard Rorty has claimed, pragmatism is a form of anti-authoritarianism. I feel the world is ready for a heaping helping of pragmatism."

As for Jermey N.A. Matthews, senior acquisitions editor in the categories of physical sciences, engineering, and mathematics, his personal favorite book in the Essential Knowledge series is *Quantum Entanglement*. "Author Jed Brody is a daring writer, and he did a fantastic job laying the groundwork in the early chapters to explain this mind-blowing quantum phenomenon," Matthews says.

For Matthews, the most gratifying aspect of being involved with the publication of the Essential Knowledge series is witnessing readers discover the books and grow as a result. "The highlight of the Essential Knowledge series is taking them 'on the road' to exhibits," he says, "and watching students, professionals, and lay people alike marvel at the variety and peculiarity of the topics, the design of the covers, the perfect length for travel reading."

And with 100 books under its belt, the Essential Knowledge series is just getting started. There's a veritable kaleidoscope of upcoming topics to explore. "The future will be illuminating," says Manaktala. "Watch this space for entries on animal rights, exoplanets, supercomputing, universal basic income, cryptography, standards, galaxies, blockchain governance, color, gain of function, carbon removal, cyborgs, and artificial general intelligence, among others."

Mars played a part in Mayan religious ceremonies and seasonal calendars, for example, and was the source of Victorian astronomers' musings about life on other worlds.

Today, Shindell explains, the cultural and social dimensions of what we do in space reflect back on global political maneuverings: U.S. and Russian astronauts live cheek by jowl on the International Space Station, in a show of strength and leadership even as the two countries are at odds 250 miles below them. "You can't operate as a modern nation without that investment in space infrastructure," he says.

Spatial relations

Are we alone in the universe? Maybe not, according to forthcoming books that give serious scientific consideration to the question. "This fascination is evergreen," says John Glynn, senior editor at Hanover Square Press. "As long as there've been

Effort, Teamwork, and Trust

PW talks with Elio Morillo

© ELIO MORILLO

Space engineer Elio Morillo immigrated to the U.S. from Ecuador as a child and grew up to work on NASA's Mars 2020 mission. He spoke with *PW* about the trajectory he charts in his memoir, *The Boy Who Reached for the Stars* (HarperOne, June).

What kind of work have you done as a space engineer?

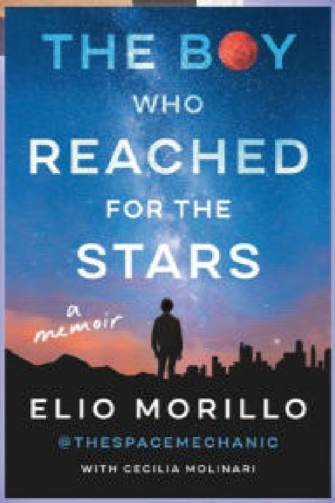
While working the Mars mission, I helped put together the Earth version of the rover. You want to keep the version that goes to space as pristine as possible, ready for the challenges of space travel. The Earth version—you want to break it. That's how you learn to fix any problems it may encounter. You use this version to update software, develop new features, test and test again. When the one on Mars runs into trouble, you use the Earth version to replicate what happened on Mars and then develop a workaround.

You write about wanting to "hold the doors wide open for the next generations." Can you talk a bit about that?

The U.S. population right now is 20% Hispanic, but only about 8% of engineers in STEM fields are Hispanic, so there's a clear gap. Engineering jobs are some of the most financially safe jobs that exist as well as some of the most rewarding and difficult, and we're underrepresented. I've been very fortunate, despite my low-income background, and part of my mission in telling my story is creating awareness and access to resources for people who are interested in pursuing careers in STEM. There's a bunch of us on social media right now, talking about the day-to-day of our STEM careers. We need more of that.

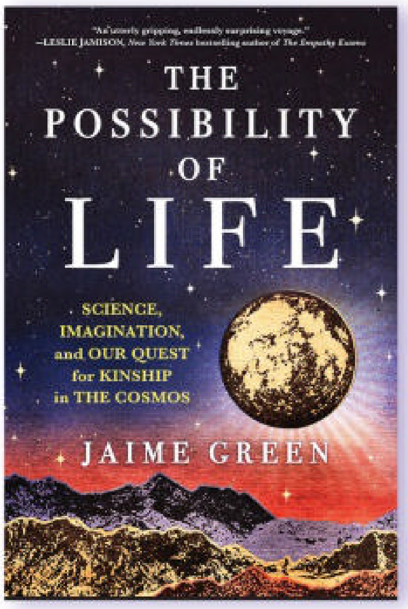
What connections do you see between your career and your upbringing?

My mother was a model of resilience, of caring for others. Her love for me was selfless. The mission that I worked on couldn't have been named any better—Perseverance. The rover traveled through space for many months, and that work requires a lot of patience, a lot of grit, effort, teamwork, and trust. In the process we learned so much about ourselves, about our opportunities for growth. There are a lot of parallels. One of the beautiful exercises of writing this book has been reflecting on my life and how these decisions got me here.



What was it like seeing Perseverance take off?

I made sure I was surrounded by friends and family. It was July 2020, the middle of the pandemic, and I hadn't seen my mom in several months. A bunch of us took the risk of flying, still a scary thing to do, and stayed at a friend's house in Orlando. My closest friends from high school and college, my mom, and my brother's family were all there and able to share it. It couldn't have been a more beautiful day. It was a moment of relief to see that rocket take off with our baby on board after all our hard work and effort. That was just the start of the journey. Rocket launches are scary; things can go wrong. We watched the rocket rise, hoping everything would go well. The mission ops team was narrating everything that was going on. My mom was next to me on the beach. —L.M.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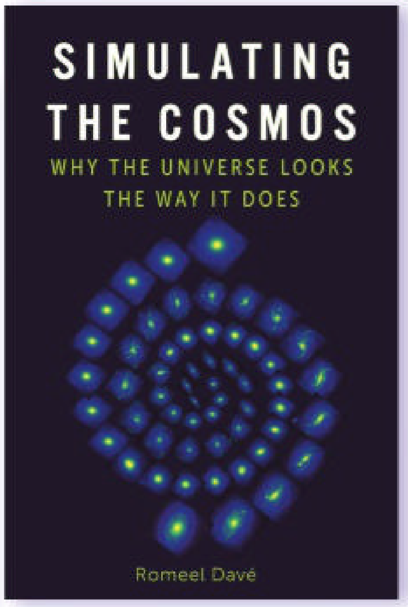
SIMULATING THE COSMOS
WHY THE UNIVERSE LOOKS THE WAY IT DOES
Romeel Davé

stars in the sky and people to look up at them, we've always wondered what's out there." Glynn edited *The Possibility of Life* (Apr.) by Jaime Greene, series editor of the Best American Science and Nature Writing. Her forthcoming book considers, per its subtitle, "our quest for kinship in the cosmos," and interrogates the question of what the discovery of alien life might mean for life on Earth.

Ariel Waldman covers similar territory in *Out There* (Running Press, Aug.), which looks at the scientific fact underpinning an array of science fiction themes, including the likelihood of our encountering alien life. (See "On- and Off-World," p. 28, for our q&a with Waldman.)

Mariner executive editor Matt Harper, who edited *Interstellar* by Avi Loeb (Aug.), says that although science fiction has dominated our view of life on other planets, "It's far less likely that aliens will show up on the White House lawn than that we'll encounter some space junk." Loeb, chair of the astronomy department at Harvard, is also the author of the "thought-provoking" (per *PW*'s review) 2021 title *Extraterrestrial,* which posited a 2017 visit by alien technology to our solar system. The idea, long the province of tin-foil haberdashers rather than Ivy League astronomers, is gaining credence in academia, and from there, the mainstream. Loeb asks in his new book: if we have indeed discovered proof of extraterrestrial life, what do we do on day two?

This year's model

Other new titles look at how computer simulations aid in the study of cosmology and galaxy formation, including *Simulating the Cosmos* by University of Edinburgh physics chair Romeel

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Davé, a July release from Reaktion Books. This modeling, says Reaktion publisher and commissioning editor Michael R. Leaman, facilitates an understanding beyond what scientists can observe or make sense of through experimentation.

"The further out you go, the less there is that we can measure," Leaman says. "Modeling is the avenue we take to try and work out what the universe might look like many trillions of light-years away. It's a way of imagining what can't be seen: new galaxies, the distance between them, new planets, and so on."

In an earlier era, says Riverhead executive editor Courtney Young, scientists fashioned mini galaxies with hundreds of light bulbs, which they moved around to simulate interstellar collisions. Today, physicists translate their theories into code and run simulations on supercomputers. In her acquisition *The Universe in a Box* (June), cosmologist Andrew Pontzen describes how the process works and what has and hasn't been

On-and Off-World

PW talks with Ariel Waldman

Science fiction not only reflects our reality but often foretells it; famously, the automatic doors on Star Trek's original *Enterprise* predated (and, some fans say, inspired) their real-life counterparts. Ariel Waldman, former advisory chair to NASA's Innovative Advanced Concepts program, spoke with *PW* about exploring the facts behind science fiction in her new book, *Out There* (Running Press, Aug.).

© MATT BIDDULPH

How does your background inform this book?

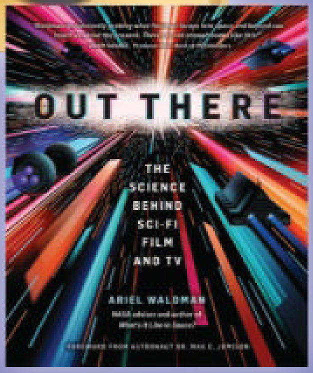
I started out in art school pursuing a career in graphic design. A few years in, I was at home watching a documentary series about the early days of NASA. I found it really inspiring, and when a friend mentioned she'd just met a NASA employee at a conference, I asked for his email and sent a shot-in-the-dark offer to volunteer. Instead, I got a job. My role was to bridge the gap between communications inside and outside of NASA, which gave me access to astronauts and researchers. Over time, I picked up on the interplay between science fiction and science, and started a podcast called *Offworld,* which discussed all things space and pop culture, a lot of the same subjects covered in *Out There.*

What led you to spend five weeks filming a documentary in Antarctica?

It was at NASA that I learned about people working in Antarctica, and I got hooked on the idea of working with those research teams in a place that can be very Mars-like. Antarctica has a lot to teach us about space exploration, how it might feel when you're on another world. When we look at the planets in our solar system, for example, we see planets that don't have vegetation. In Antarctica, the life that's there has had to invent unique ways to adapt, such as surviving inside of rocks. The Dry Valleys are said to be one of most Mars-like areas on Earth because of the incredible dryness and the incredible cold; it's like going to space while staying on Earth.

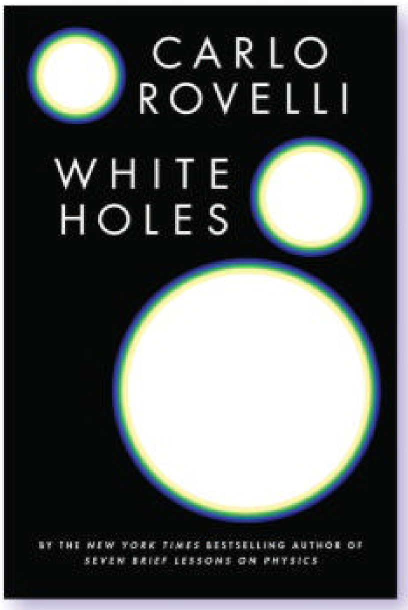
In one section of the book you talk about whether spaceships should be sentient. What do you make of the recent fascination with AI?

It's great that this topic has now entered a phase where everyone has opinions about it. From a pop culture perspective, it's exciting to see it be something everyone can discuss, not just highly technical people. In the book I talk about spaceships becoming sentient because that's a natural next discussion after ChatGPT and stable diffusion, what AI could look like in our homes and our living environment, what it means to have living systems powered by AI.



What subjects intrigue you most in science fiction?

Exploration of the line between human and not-human is classic; that debate will play out for the rest of time. I love how nuanced and fascinating you can make it when you put technical innovation into a world and have people interact with it. I'm interested in the fraught topics—there are researchers working to see if we can put people in suspended animation to travel elsewhere. There's a lot of debate about it, and there are really big implications when you take something that profound from science fiction and try to make it reality. It's exciting that we can talk about it, but also terrifying because if we get it wrong, we're playing with people's lives. —L.S.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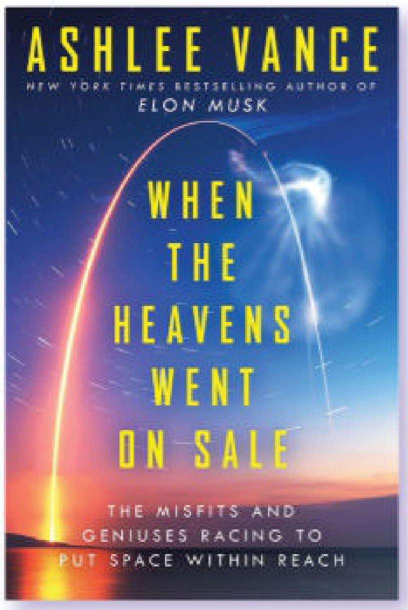
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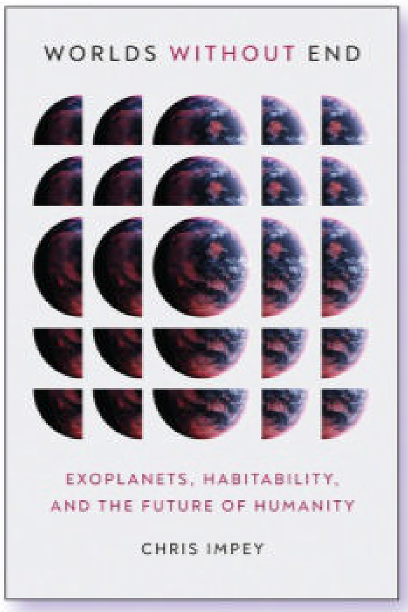

WORLDS WITHOUT END
EXOPLANETS, HABITABILITY, AND THE FUTURE OF HUMANITY
CHRIS IMPEY

revealed—yet. "Anytime we see something new," Young says, "it reminds us that there's more out there that we haven't found."

Young also edits Carlo Rovelli, a theoretical physicist whose previous books include *Seven Brief Lessons on Physics* (194,000 print copies sold). In *White Holes* (Riverhead, Oct.), he discusses one of the great questions of cosmology: what happens inside a black hole? "We're trying to understand the flow of time," Young says. "The book is very personal—it talks about the experience of coming up with these ideas, the collaboration with other scientists, the trepidation around an idea with which many others will likely disagree."

High flyers

Several editors brought up the privatization of space travel, and frequent news items about SpaceX and Blue Origin, as capturing public interest and raising important questions.

"Space is no longer just the stomping ground of the federal government," says Hanover Square's Glynn.

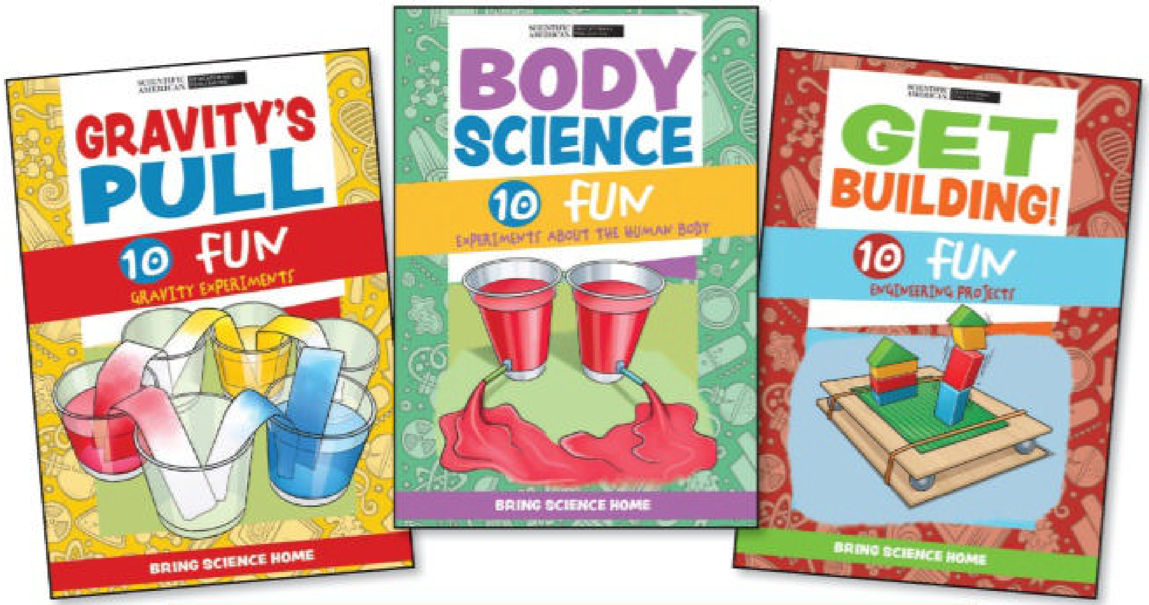
Ecco associate publisher Miriam Parker agrees. "It was the same for a very long time," she says. "Governments paid to go, the space shuttle went up, astronauts manned them. In the last eight to 10 years, because of Astra, RocketLabs, SpaceX, this shift happened. People like Jeff Bezos going to space makes people think it's more attainable. It's not a government thing anymore; it's a corporate thing."

Bloomberg Businessweek journalist Ashlee Vance delves into the ramifications of cosmic capitalism in *When the Heavens Went on Sale* (Ecco, May), which *PW*'s starred review called "a fresh look at the new space race." Vance, author of 2015's *Elon Musk* (428,000 print copies sold), writes that the Russian invasion of Ukraine is "the first true Space War"; the Ukrainian military has used the commercial satellite system to monitor Russian troop movements. There are currently 2,500 satellites circling the Earth, and Vance estimates that that number will grow to 100,000 within the next 10 years.

The public is now thinking about our future in space, editors say, and about who gets to define that future. In *Worlds Without End*, an April release from MIT Press, University of Arizona astronomy professor Chris Impey ponders the ethics of exploring space and what such ventures mean for life on Earth.

"He addresses questions of land grabbing and how, historically, human exploration has skewed this way," says Jermy Matthews, senior acquisition editor, physical science, engineering, and mathematics, at MIT Press. "We're seeing the challenges of humans fighting over space, of access to space travel ending up in the hands of billionaires."

Philip Plait, known to some 610,000 Twitter followers as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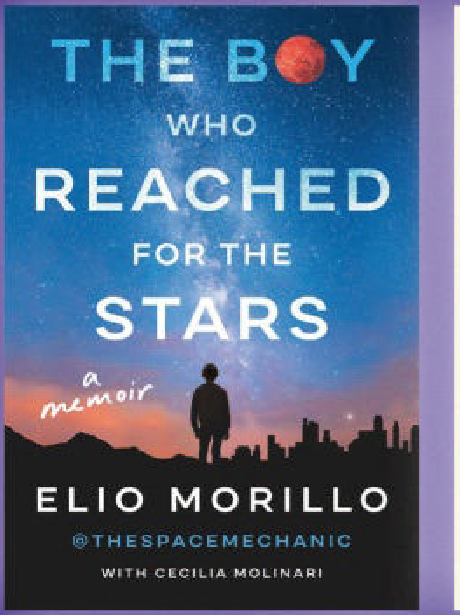

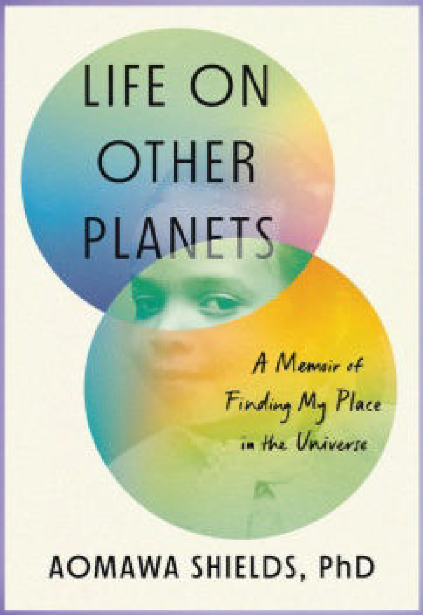

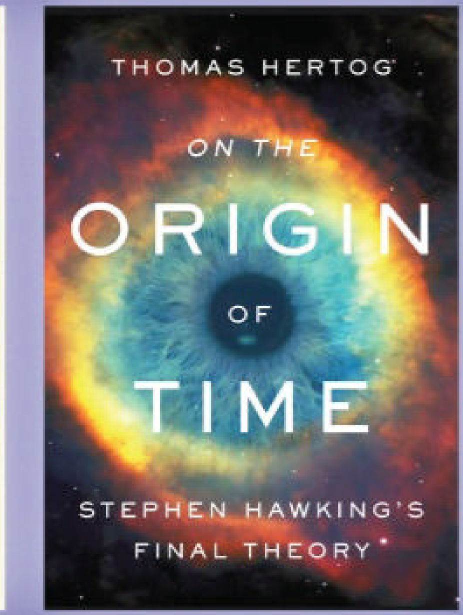

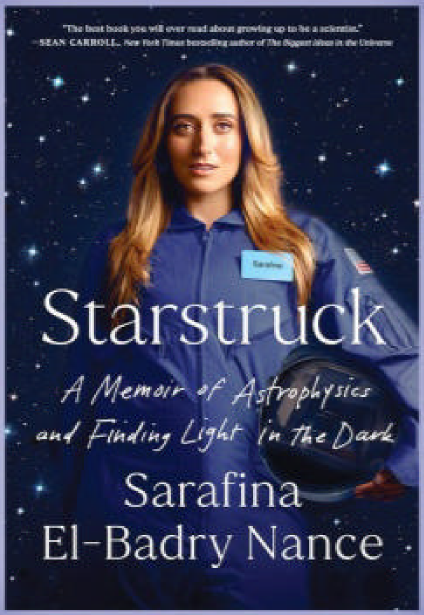

The Boy Who Reached for the Stars

Elio Morillo. HarperOne, June

Financial need brought Morillo and his devoted single mother from Ecuador to the United States and set him on a path that led to a position as a systems engineer at NASA, helping to launch the Mars rover Perseverance. The work was rewarding, he writes, while acknowledging the stress and long hours that led to burnout. (See "Effort, Teamwork, and Trust," p. 26, for our q&a with Morillo.)

Life on Other Planets

Aomawa Shields. Viking, July

The opinion of a white male professor convinced Shields—a young Black woman whose interest in fashion and the arts didn't negate her passion for science—that she didn't belong in her astrophysics PhD program. She pivoted to acting, but a decade later, a job as a desk operator at NASA's Spitzer Space Telescope returned her to her former field. She completed her PhD and today, as an astronomer, astrobiologist, and UC Irvine physics professor, Shields uses her theatrical training to encourage girls in STEM.

On the Origin of Time

Thomas Hertog. Bantam, out now

In what *PW*'s review called a "provocative if dense debut," Hertog, a cosmologist and professor of theoretical physics at the University of Leuven, discusses his two-decade friendship and professional collaboration with Stephen Hawking and the theories they developed on the origin of life in the universe, which diverge from the ideas put forward in Hawking's *A Brief History of Time*. The narrative intersperses heady theory with discussions between the duo and Hertog's personal observations: "With barely a flicker of motion, he breathed so much life into our conversation," he writes.

Starstruck

Sarafina El-Badry Nance. Dutton, June

As a child growing up in Texas, El-Badry Nance had parents who supported her academic interests but heard from others that girls weren't cut out for science; she shut her ears to the negativity and cast her eyes skyward. The astrophysicist and women's health advocate recounts the misogyny and racism she encountered as a female Egyptian American scientist, and the challenges she faced in navigating an unwelcoming field, all leavened with her love for the stars. —L.S.

Bad Astronomer, takes a conversational approach to space travel in *Under Alien Skies* (Norton, Apr.), aimed at what his editor Jessica Yao describes as a "joyfully nerdy crowd." Writing in the second person, "Plait provides accessible overviews of the strange and exciting science involved in the otherworldly scenes," per *PW*'s starred review, making for "an awe-inspiring tour of the cosmos."

For the joyful nerds, the armchair astronomers, and those who want to be astronauts when they grow up—good news, these authors say: the stars are getting closer with every revolution of the Earth. ■

Liz Scheier is a writer, editor, and product strategist living in Washington, D.C. She is the author of the memoir Never Simple.

Can Manga Sales Steady?

As the booming category shifts to a slower burn, manga publishers and retailers look toward digital innovations and global models

By Deb Aoki

Jujutsu Kaisen manga for sale inside a Barnes & Noble store.

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After several years of explosive growth, manga sales remain higher than in 2019 but appear to be leveling off. "The extra demand that was created for home entertainment during the pandemic seems to have settled," says Masaaki Shimizu, general manager and publisher at Square Enix Manga & Books.

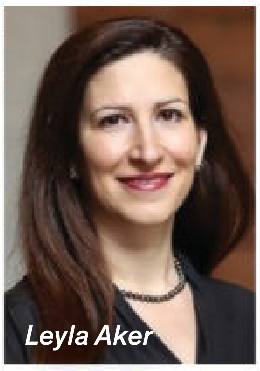
Still, manga is a dominant force in North American graphic novel publishing. In the U.S., 16.9 million units were sold in 2022 (54% of the total graphic novel sales), raking in more than $246 million, according to Brian Hibbs, founder of San Francisco's Comix Experience, in his annual report for the *Beat.*

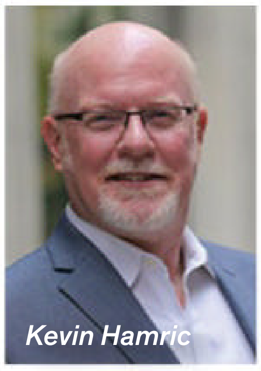
A 6.8% year-over-year increase, as Hibbs reports, is generally good news—but compared to the 68.5% growth in 2021, publishers and retailers have reasons to be cautious in planning for 2023 and beyond. "After the unprecedented growth, there is a bit of softening," says Kevin Hamric, v-p, publishing sales at Viz Media.

According to Shimizu, 2023 has been down in the first 10 weeks of the year by 20% over the similar period last year. He attributes this to the decline of mega-hit series. "When we look at the units sold for the top-selling 10 titles and 100 titles during the same period, the year-to-date units are down by 45% and 35%, respectively," he says.

That said, the most recent volume of *Spy x Family* was the bestselling book in the U.S. in early April, according to data from Circana BookScan, with *Jujutsu Kaisen, Vol. 19* holding on to the fifth spot on the chart (Colleen Hoover occupied the slots in between).

Masaaki Shimizu


Leyla Aker


Kevin Hamric

"We're starting to see the market come back down to earth," says Leyla Aker, publishing director at Penguin Random House Publisher Services. "The question is whether sales will stay at an elevated point as a new steady state, or whether they'll decrease in a contractive cycle as before."

Hamric says, "No alarm bells are going off and no panic buttons are being pushed." But in all aspects of manga publishing, stakeholders are wondering what's next.

Global markets lead the way

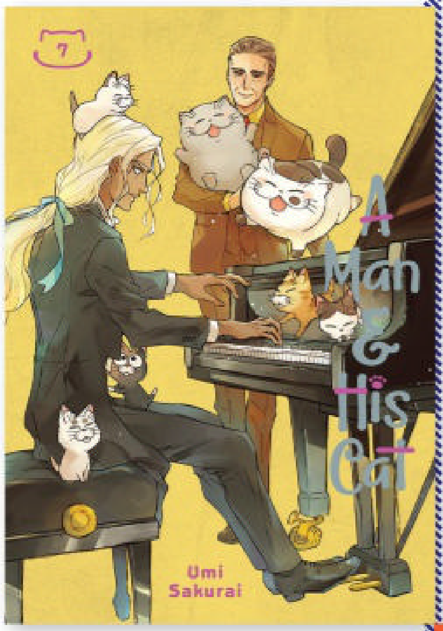
While U.S. manga sales are cooling, publishers are looking toward other markets where manga has flourished as an import as models for future growth here. Though $246 million in manga sales in 2022 sounds incredible (especially when compared to $49.9 million in 2019), it's trumped by sales in France (the second-largest market for manga after Japan).

According to market research firm GfK Market Intelligence, in partnership with the Angoulême

International Comics Festival, French manga sales reached €381 million (approximately $417 million at the current exchange rate) in 2022. In that year, 47 million units of manga sold in France, more than double the country's 22-million-unit record set in 2020. Overall manga sales in France have quadrupled in the past decade. Today, one in seven books sold in France is manga.

Nobuhiko Muranaka, director of global publishing at Square Enix, says Japanese manga publishers like his own should challenge themselves to expand their translation sales, arguing there's an appetite among U.S. customers for more "official editions of manga."

Ivan Salazar, senior marketing director for Kodansha USA, agrees. "We think there's definitely room for more players in the manga space, whether it's publishing or digital distribution—especially considering the sheer amount of stories that are published in Japan," he notes.



Everything, everywhere, all at once

Manga is selling well partly because of visibility. "From the number of legal ways you can access digital manga to the variety of physical stores that carry manga, from direct market comic shops all the way to mass market stores like Target and Walmart, fans no longer have to seek out a few restricted channels," Salazar says.

"Manga has grown from a niche category to one of the top categories in the entire company," says Kat Sarfas, category manager for manga at Barnes & Noble. "The popularity is not just a passing trend. Now that the initial frenzy has calmed down, we are continuing our focus on curating the best assortment for our customers."

But B&N and big-box stores aren't the only ones expanding manga's footprint. Ed Chavez, president and editor-in-chief at Denpa, says he's noticed "a steady increase in manga specialty stores," such as Kobe Mini Mart near Sacramento, Calif., Otaku Market in Union, Ohio, and Yiggybean online; it's a trend Chavez hopes continues. He also points to signs of growth from foreign markets, bringing up that Denpa recently picked up accounts in the Philippines, the Middle East, and Guam.

Too much of a good thing?

Given past boom and bust cycles for manga in North America, publishers and booksellers harbor lingering concerns about history repeating itself. As more manga imprints enter the market, the fear is of a surfeit of new releases.

One hope is, instead, that the e-book, apps, and streaming market will keep generating new fans. Comparing the current era to the mid-aughts, when sales rapidly rose and fell, Aker says that "anime remains the primary sales driver for manga." But now, she adds, anime can be viewed across a growing number of streaming sites (such as Netflix, Hulu, and Crunchyroll) as opposed to only the Cartoon Network. "The general consensus is that this increase in anime streaming led to the concomitant increase in manga sales."

While streaming options have diversified, however, book sales channels continue to consolidate. "The majority now go through one online retailer, Amazon, and one physical retailer, Barnes & Noble, which together now account for over half of U.S. manga sales annually," Aker says.

With sales softening, budgets are tightening up. Publishers are more selective about the titles they're licensing, even while the expansion of digital distribution can make it easier to try out traditionally riskier bets, such as series with more than 20 volumes, older reissues, or genres that are relatively new for North American manga readers.

"Series publishing is always difficult, and it gets harder as a series gets longer," Hamric says. "And then add to it the sheer number of series that are being published," but, he says, "this is a good problem to have, and we work with our retailers and librarians to help them manage selection and merchandising."

GOODBYE, ERI
STORY AND ART BY
TATSUKI FUJIMOTO

Booksellers also warily recall previous periods when manga flooded the market—especially independent comics shops, which were left with nonreturnable stock. "Anyone who's been around for a while remembers the boom and bust of manga in bookstores in the early 2000s," says Ryan Higgins, owner of Comics Conspiracy, a comics shop based in Sunnyvale, Calif.

Limited shelf space for manga is a concern for both publishers and retailers. Many popular manga series run up 20 or more volumes (perennial favorite shonen series One Piece by Eiichiro Oda is up to 103 volumes and counting).

"Fighting for shelf space is always an issue," notes Erik Ko, chief of operations at Udon Entertainment. With the amount of manga releases growing so rapidly, retailers and consumers simply can't buy them all, "so it is pretty much a survival-of-the-fittest-type situation," Ko says.

This struggle is acute for direct market comics retailers like Comics Conspiracy, which rely on a customer base that preorders comics before release date so as to minimize ordering stock they can't sell quickly and can't return later. "Generally, we stock volume one of a lot of popular titles and special order or set up subscriptions for later volumes, as we just don't have the

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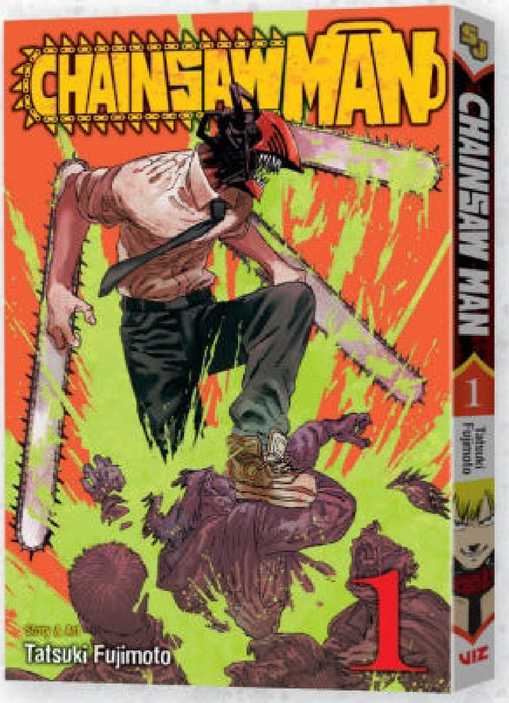
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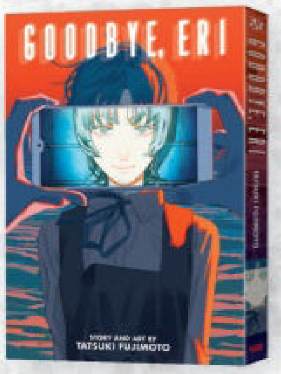
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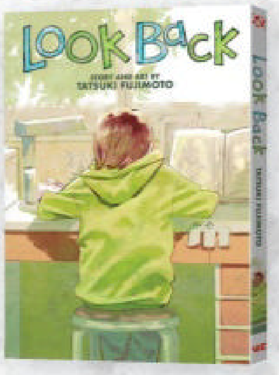
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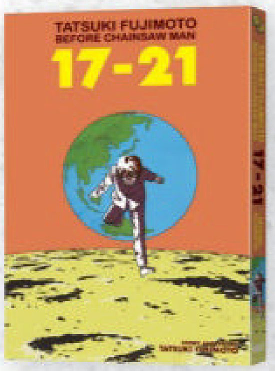
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physical space to carry full runs of many series," Higgins says. "Keeping those early volumes in print is essential to keep readers coming back."

Sarfas adds, "Of course, fans are going to come out big for that latest volume, but emphasizing full series and backlist picks has also really worked for us. Classic series like *Berserk* and *JoJo's Bizarre Adventure* continue to sell well for a reason."

From a publisher's point of view, a surplus of variety on shelves creates competition for their own midlist and backlist titles. "Hidden gems could get lost," Ko says, adding that publishers need to "figure out how to do outreach to ensure that our new titles are being discovered."

Lianne Sentar, sales and marketing manager at Seven Seas Entertainment, puts forward a hopeful sentiment, though: "We're starting to see things stabilize, and in a good way. The new normal is a much bigger manga/light novel industry that's a bigger piece of all North American publishing."

More manga goes digital

Meanwhile, Japanese publishers have ramped up their efforts to release more titles in English via digital platforms. In addition to Kodansha's K Manga app, which is set to debut in May, several launched in 2022, including Square Enix's Manga Up! and NTT Solmare's Manga Plaza. A number of publishers, including Animate International, Kadokawa Digi-Pub, and Shu-Cream, also expanded their direct-to-consumer e-book offerings.

Digital publishing has financial and logistical advantages: it's faster to bring titles to market and eliminates the up-front investment required to produce, ship, and distribute print books. For readers, direct-to-digital releases means that there's now more manga, webtoons, and light novels (prose works based on manga story lines with spot illustrations) available in English, and a greater variety of stories and art styles, than ever before. And fulfilment is faster: many publishers, including Kodansha, Viz Media, and Yen Press, are releasing new chapters of popular manga series in English the same day as in Japan.

It hasn't all gone smoothly. Square Enix's 2022 launch of the English version of its Manga Up! app received mixed reviews from readers—a point Muranaka, the producer of the Manga Up! global app, acknowledges. "We have made a lot of steady improvements," he says. "However, we believe there are still many issues to be addressed, and we are planning some major updates to meet our customers' expectations."

While digital manga sales now represent over 66.2% of the

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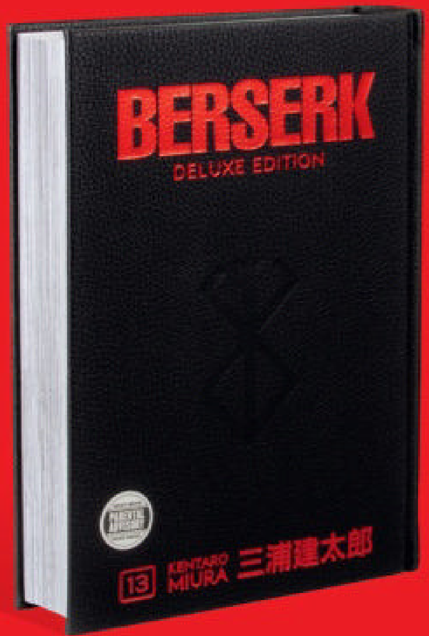
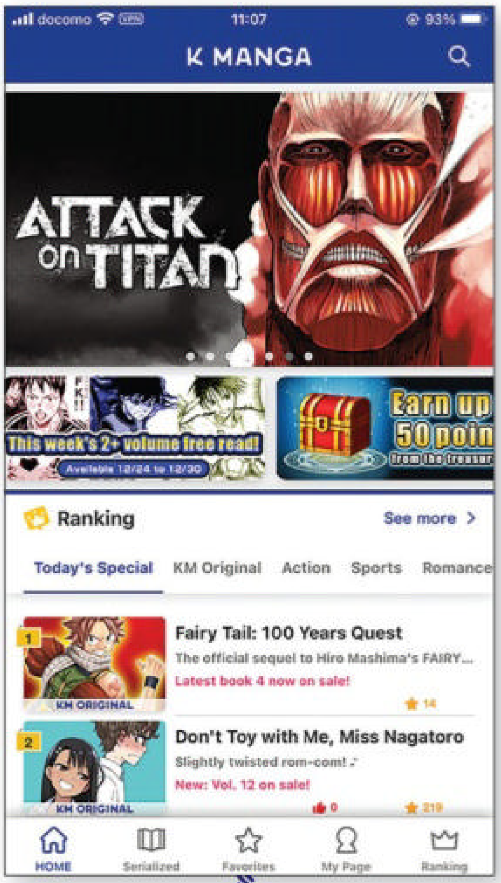


manga sold in Japan, by almost all accounts, English-language readers' adoption of digital manga hasn't quite kept pace. "Digital manga sales have been steady, but the consumption of e-books in the U.S. is not near the levels of Japan," reports Beth Kawasaki, executive director of content and marketing at Media Do International, a leading digital manga distributor.

The actual size and sales trends in this digital manga market are nearly impossible to track, since there's no single sales report for e-books, nor is there tracking for readership of streaming subscription services like Azuki, Comikey, Mangamo, Manga Planet, Manga Plaza, and Manga Up!, much less webtoon services like Lezhin, Manta, Tapas, TappyToon, and Webtoon.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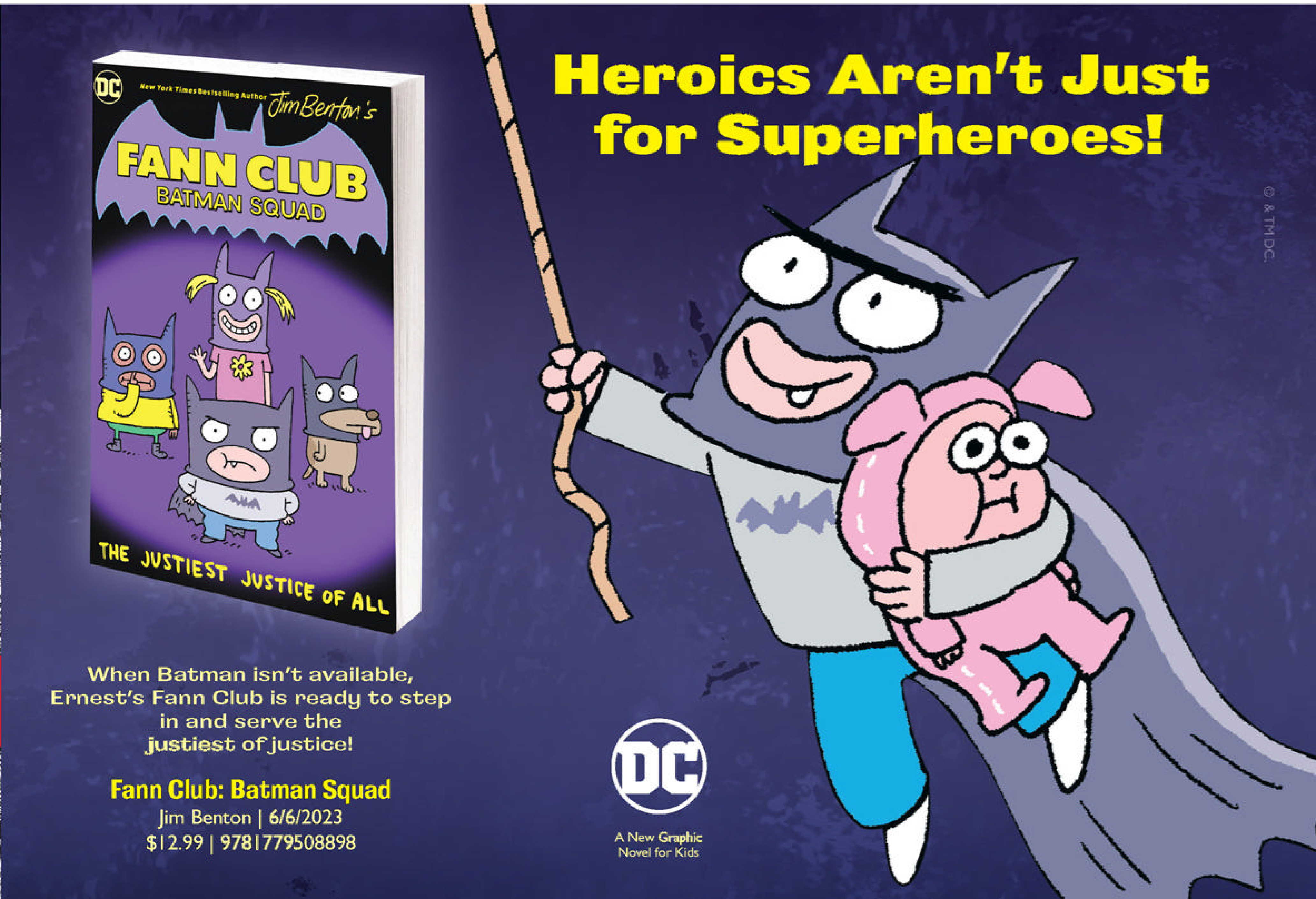
However, the trend seems to be that readers only want more and more subgenre representation. "Romance/shojo and BL/boys'-love, along with horror, have seen an uptick in demand," Kawasaki says. "I think fans will continue to gravitate toward platforms that are familiar and convenient, but there is room for newer players to capture some market share if they have exclusives or a high-perceived value to help set them apart."

One way that some streaming and subscription services have responded to the increasingly competitive battle for readers' attention is by picking up more exclusive content, and offering their titles direct to consumers as digital e-books. Azuki, for example, offered its recent releases of *My Dear Detective: Mitsuko's Case Files* by Natsumi Ito direct. Kodansha's K Manga app is also promising more exclusive simulpub content, with many series making their official English-language debut on this platform.

Another growth area for digital manga publishing is the library market. Kawasaki says Media Do offers some thousands of volumes of manga (in English and some original-language) through OverDrive, which "readers will know through their Sora app for schools or their Libby app for public libraries.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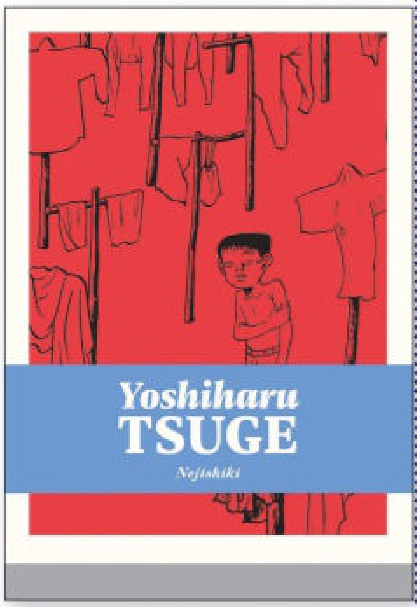
Last year, we also launched on Library Pass to bring manga to their curated experience, and they've really leaned into their editorial strategy."

A caveat to the genre expansion is that explicit content can still get blocked on mainstream e-book retailers. "Mature-rated books don't get carried on all digital platforms, but they don't need to be," says Seven Seas' Sentar. "Fans will find what they want on our web of various distributors."

More manga for almost every reader

Diversity in manga is another area of growth. Quarto is giving Saturday AM titles by global BIPOC creators greater visibility and distribution, as is TokyoPop's deal with Noir Caesar, a publishing brand founded by former NBA player Johnny O'Bryant, to develop and distribute its manga that focuses mostly on Black and Latinx protagonists by global creators. Kae Winters, marketing lead at TokyoPop, says, "Seeing more BIPOC representation in manga is a huge deal, and we're really impressed by the storytelling and art quality from the Noir Caesar team." TokyoPop plans to showcase these diverse titles at Anime Expo and San Diego Comic-Con, both in California, this summer.

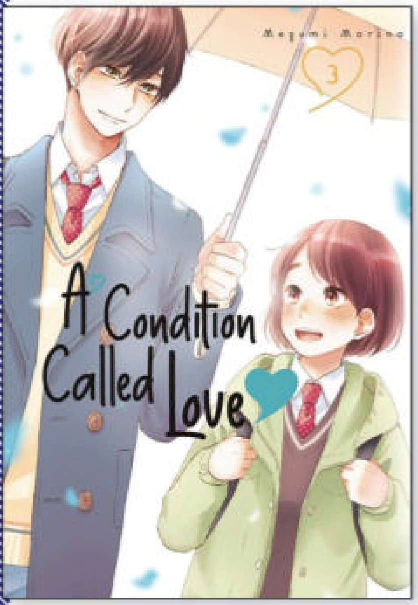


Independent houses have also taken part in the rising tide, bringing lesser-known and more indie-style artists to broader manga readers, including more Korean and Chinese and other global manga creators. Drawn & Quarterly, Fantagraphics, and Last Gasp are offering small but smartly curated lists of new and classic manga titles. Micropublishers like Glacier Bay Books, Starfruit Books, and Irodori are also growing and expanding their lists.

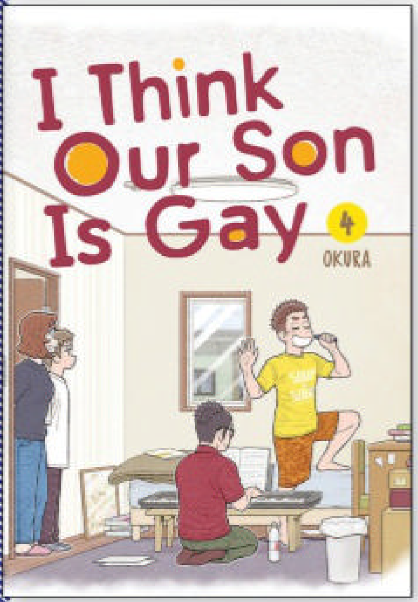
Tom Devlin, executive editor at Drawn & Quarterly, points out that while the publisher puts out manga, most notably by critically acclaimed creators like Shigeru Mizuki and Yoshiharu Tsuge, it has "always tried to find individual voices with our North American cartoonists, and we look for the same in our foreign cartoonists—Asian or otherwise." He adds, "Books like *20KM/H* by Woshibai or *Night Bus* by Zuo Ma were chosen because they were singular cartooning voices. I understand the division of manga from comics is an important marketing tool, but we don't look at manga as some sort of genre. They're just great comics made by great cartoonists."

Ed Chavez

In terms of genre diversity, shonen manga still dominates the manga market, but publishers and booksellers report there's strong and growing demand for shojo and josei manga, "mature romance," and boys'-love stories. Salazar reports that Kodansha is "seeing more shojo and josei series among our top-selling titles for new releases. We're working on meeting this demand by bringing more shojo and josei to print—like *A Condition Called Love* and the forthcoming *Nina the Starry Bride*."



Boys'-love and josei manga-centric sites like Manga Planet, Manga Plaza, and Renta have arisen to meet the needs of this readership. Meanwhile, the selection on webtoon sites like Lezhin, Manta, Tapas, TappyToon, and Webtoon skews heavily toward romances, including modern, historical and fantasy-based tales—an indication that they're addressing an unmet need and a potentially larger book publishing market for these genres.



LGBTQ content continues to be popular with manga readers, including boys'-love manga, girls'-love manga, and manga about gay, lesbian, and queer experiences, such as *I Think My Son Is Gay* from Square Enix and *Why I Adopted My Husband: The True Story of a Gay Couple Seeking Legal Recognition in Japan* from TokyoPop.

But there's another, potentially larger and currently underserved segment of the market: manga for younger readers, especially for those under 12. "Although the manga market has matured over here, it's still mostly aimed at teens," Sentar says. "There's definitely room for growth in manga aimed at young children and adults, which both have far more selection in Japan."

"Kids' manga should eventually hit really hard in the English market," Chavez adds. "But outside of a few titles like *Chi's Sweet Home*, *Legend of Zelda*, and *Splatoon*, I am not really seeing it."

With the amount of investment being poured into the general middle grade comics market in the U.S., and the breadth and diversity of that category in Japan, kids' manga seems like a ready prospect here.

"It's an exciting time for manga, webtoons and anime," says Rich Young, cofounder and publisher of Ablaze, which is growing its manga list. "As their reach becomes more global and we continue to innovate, the future looks bright." ■

Deb Aoki writes regularly for PW *about manga.*

S.A. Cosby Is Finding His Religion

The crime writer's latest thriller follows a Black sheriff who has a crisis of faith while facing down a serial killer

By Conner Reed

S.A. Cosby lost his faith in a single afternoon. Growing up in Mathews County, Va.—a community of 8,000 served by 23 churches—the crime writer attended regular services at a 19th-century Pentecostal congregation founded by his great-grandfather. In the 1980s, when Cosby was 11, his mother—who'd suffered from spinal stenosis for his entire life—took him to a faith-healing tent revival. On the way in, the pair spotted some men smoking cigarettes with their backs to attendees; when the service began, the same men donned crutches and feigned blindness before hitting the stage to be "healed."

"In that moment, my mother said to me, 'They're not healing nobody here. They're just healing their pockets,' " recalls Cosby during a Zoom call from his home in Southeastern Virginia. "And that shaped my own relationship with religion and spirituality."

Cosby's latest novel, *All the Sinners Bleed* (Flatiron, June), weaves a similar crisis of faith into a gruesome murder mystery. Titus Crown, a semi-disgraced former FBI agent, returns home to the fictional Charon County (named for the ferryman who ushers souls across the River Styx) in Virginia to become the region's first Black sheriff. In the middle of a school day, a friend's son shoots a beloved history teacher and is subsequently gunned down by Titus's deputies. While investigating that shooting, Titus uncovers the work of a local serial killer who's donned a mask and filmed biblically influenced executions of at least seven Black children over several years. As more bodies pile up, Titus—who left the church shortly after his mother's death—traverses what Flannery O'Connor might call the "Christ-haunted

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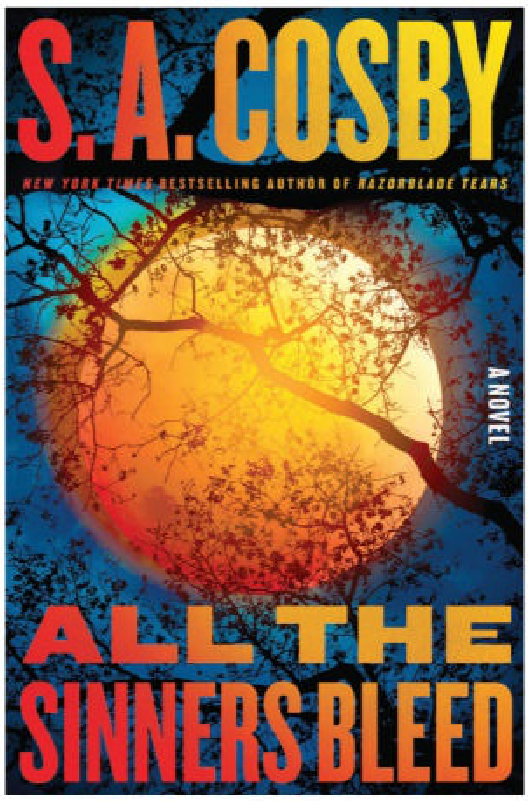
South" in pursuit of the killer.

Sinners wasn't always going to be so God focused. After his bestselling, blood-splattered 2021 epic *Razorblade Tears* won acclaim from Barack Obama and the *New York Times*, Cosby felt compelled to tackle something timely in its follow-up. With the murder of George Floyd fresh on his mind, he got to work on a project titled *Black as Sackcloth* that zeroed in on police brutality. Before long, though, he found his own feelings on the subject too potent to wrestle into fiction. "Nobody wants a 300-page sermon, and it was shaping up to be that," Cosby admits.

So for about six months, he wrote nothing. Then a conversation with a colleague about "the four pillars of Southern fiction"—race, class, religion, and sex—shook something loose. He'd tackled them all, in some form, in his previous novels (including 2018's *My Darkest Prayer* and 2020's *Blacktop Wasteland*), but he'd yet to go deep on religion. "I wanted to talk about the way religion is used as a cudgel and a comfort in the South, how it divides and brings people together," Cosby says. "And also how it can be used for really, really dark, nefarious purposes."



Thus, *Sackcloth* morphed into *Sinners*, drawing less from the headlines and more from moody modern procedurals with gothic twists, like the HBO series *True Detective* and Gillian Flynn's *Sharp Objects*. The novel opens with, and is punctuated by, atmospheric chapters that appear to emerge from the consciousness of the setting itself; after twin epigraphs from Joseph Conrad and the Book of Revelation, the book's first sentence is, "Charon County was founded in bloodshed and darkness."

All that Old Testament feeling never completely subsumed Cosby's initial fascinations, though. "I gave up on the idea of tackling the larger, macro idea of policing in America, but I still wanted to talk about the idea of being an African American police officer," he emphasizes. As he reformulated the book's plot, he interviewed friends and acquaintances who'd worked in law enforcement, giving special weight to one who served as the first Black sheriff of a neighboring county.

"My previous books were about outlaws," Cosby says. "That's fun, but to a certain extent, it's also a little easier, because you don't have to play by the rules. Titus is constrained by the rules of his office, and I really wanted to examine that. How does that inform him as a character? Can he still be a hero? I didn't want the book to be 'copaganda'; I wanted it to be a character study of this man who really, really wants to do the right thing."

Readers who only know Cosby through his hard-edged fiction might be surprised that he's a self-proclaimed "big softie" (even though, he admits, he's been in more than one bar fight). A giddy, gregarious conversationalist, he's prone to smiling so wide his eyes almost disappear. His bookshelves are full of Cormac McCarthy, yes, but also Samuel Beckett and cozy mysteries, and he's a big fan of French new wave films. "It always cracks me up when I talk about stuff like that," Cosby says with a laugh. "The look I get from people is like, 'Oh, gosh, we thought you just spent all your days chopping up bad guys in woodchippers.' "

That disarming charm helped Cosby land his agent, HG Literary's Josh Getzler. After 63 rejections for his first novel (yes, that's a precise figure: he counted the emails), Cosby parted ways with the agent who was representing him and sank into a rut. Urged by his wife to attend the 2018 Bouchercon mystery convention in St. Petersburg, Fla., he wound up on a panel there after someone else canceled at the last minute. In the q&a portion, a white woman chided the panelists for being "too hard on white people," defending the "manners and etiquette" of the antebellum period.

"Everybody in the room kind of gasped, and the panelists looked at each other to see who was going to say anything," recalls Getzler, who was in the audience. "[Cosby] sort of nodded his head and smiled, and in the space of a minute, took the woman to task in a manner that was not rude and nasty in the way that she had been, but really spoke to the facility with language and respect for humanity that he has."

After the panel wrapped, Getzler chased Cosby down a hotel corridor. A few weeks later, Getzler was representing him.

Cosby's life has changed considerably since he was a young Holy Roller in rural Virginia attending tent revivals with his mother. He's teamed up with Questlove to pen a middle grade time-travel series; each of his adult novels has been optioned for film. "It's pretty heady stuff, and we're still trying to get him to enhance his Wi-Fi," Getzler jokes.

What's stayed steady, though, is Cosby's identification with the downtrodden. Even as he has abandoned what he calls "big-C Church" he's found an unexpected spiritual outlet in crime fiction. "I think there's no better genre to talk about the human condition," he says, calling it "the gospel of the dispossessed." He adds, "Not everybody is going to be a professor from the Upper West Side, like a character in a Philip Roth book, or a minister from the Midwest, like in Jonathan Franzen's *Crossroads*. But I think everybody's felt desperate, and everybody's felt that their back is against the wall."

It calls to mind a passage from early on in *Sinners*: "Twenty years removed from the last time he willingly attended a church service, and he still found himself using the jargon of the devout," Cosby writes of Titus. "It never left you, not completely. The cadence, the syncopation, the King James syntax. It was all there waiting to reemerge like seventeen-year cicadas." ■

Reviews

Fiction

★ The Memory of Animals

Claire Fuller. Tin House, $27.95 (296p) ISBN 978-1-953534-87-3

Fuller (*Unsettled Ground*) crafts a haunting novel of second chances set in a near-future pandemic. Twenty-something Neffy, still grieving the loss of her father and embarrassed by the crumbling of her marine biology career after a professional misstep, signs up as a vaccine test subject during the early days of the pandemic. While Neffy and her fellow volunteers are isolated in a London hospital as they undergo treatment, the virus, nicknamed "Dropsy," develops a new and deadly variant, which causes sudden memory loss before certain death. Neffy, who may have developed immunity, is identified as the group's best hope for the future, but after fellow test subject Leon introduces her to a new technology called Revisiting, which allows her to relive moments from her past, she becomes increasingly drawn to the treatment. Fuller's intricately structured narrative makes great use of the Revisiting conceit, allowing Neffy's history—including her love for an octopus she once cared for at an aquarium—to wrap itself around an increasingly nightmarish present, as Neffy uncovers secrets about the virus's progression that other volunteers have been keeping from her. The entwined pain and pleasure of memory is at the heart of Neffy's story, as is the hard work of establishing trust and finding forgiveness, particularly for oneself. This is a pandemic novel, yes, but one that radically transcends the label. *(June)*

I Am Homeless if This Is Not My Home

Lorrie Moore. Knopf, $27 (208p) ISBN 978-0-307-59414-3

In the thoughtful and witty latest from Moore (*A Gate at the Stairs*), a man takes a road trip with his undead ex-girlfriend. Finn, a recently suspended high school teacher, returns home from New York City to the Midwest after his ex, Lily, dies by suicide. When Finn visits Lily's grave, she seems alive, yet in the early stages of decomposition. She convinces Finn to drive her to a "body farm" in Tennessee, where she can die once more and become a specimen for forensic research. Interspersed with the road trip are letters written by a boarding house proprietress to her dead sister in the years following the Civil War, which Finn discovers while staying with Lily at a bed and breakfast on the road. As in Moore's previous work, her characters rifle off barbs (Finn asks the dead but alive Lily, "Are you ghosting me?") and non sequiturs (after pondering the word *tomorrow*, Lily asks Finn, "Do you still have satellite radio?"). Some of the jokes are sharper than others, but Moore strikes gold when her characters drop the act and express their feelings, building to a beautiful meditation on the difficulty of letting go, as well as the ways in which a person lives on through the memories of others. The author's fans will love it, and those new to Moore will want see what else they've been missing. *(June)*

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Claire Fuller's The Memory of Animals *is a pandemic novel with ingenious speculative elements (reviewed on this page).*

The Mythmakers

Keziah Weir. S&S/Rucci, $28 (368p) ISBN 978-1-982189-58-7

Weir, an editor at *Vanity Fair*, debuts with the engrossing narrative of Sal Cannon, a magazine writer who recognizes herself in a short story by a famous novelist. The story, published in the *Paris Review* by the late Martin Keller, a contemporary of Norman Mailer, includes a detail from Sal's brief encounter with Keller six years earlier, when they flirted at an event and he took a silver barrette from her hair. This detail appears in the story, which is about a young woman's effect on an older writer's imagination. It turns out the story was excerpted from a longer work, and Sal pitches a feature on Keller, hoping to get her hands on his manuscript. She's already in a vulnerable place, having blundered a profile of a playwright in her desire to tell a good story. After she gets the assignment, she talks with Keller's widow, Moira, hoping to pick up clues about why she inspired Keller. Along the way, Weir shifts the perspective to Moira, Martin, and other characters related to the couple, delving into themes of creative ambition. Weir has a journalist's eye for mood and setting, whether in her perceptive account of Sal's trials or her astute portrayal of Martin's turbulent early years as a novelist. It's an auspicious first outing. *Agents: Michelle Brower, Trellis Literary, and Jen Marshall, Aevitas Creative Management. (June)*

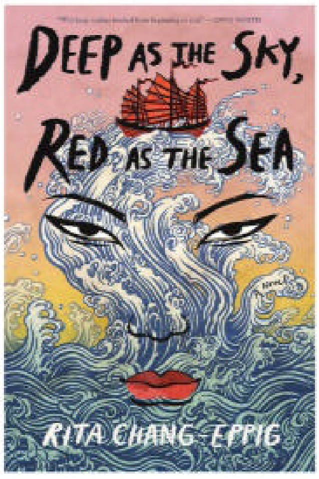
Lucky Dogs

Helen Schulman. Knopf, $29 (336p) ISBN 978-0-593-53623-0

Schulman (*Come with Me*) delivers an incisive and thrilling account of women who are hounded by powerful men. Meredith Montgomery, a famous young actor, is keeping a low profile in Paris, subsisting on Xanax and ice cream as she works on the tell-all memoir that will unmask "the Rug," her nickname for the Weinsteinesque producer who assaulted her, then had her blacklisted after she tried to speak out. One day, while being harassed by a pair of sleazy tourists, she is saved by the switchblade-wielding Nina, who offers Merry the help of her organization, W2, which is dedicated to lifting up the voices of women. Turns out Nina's story is too good to be true—Nina is actually an ex-Mossad spy on the Rug's payroll, charged with stealing Merry's manuscript and discrediting her in the eyes of the public. Schulman then shifts perspective to flashbacks of Nina's war-torn childhood in Bosnia with her family, and shows how hindrances to Nina's ambitions to become an actor run parallel to Merry's own hurdles in her career. Though the diptych structure can sap momentum, Meredith and Nina's intriguing relationship will

★ Deep as the Sky, Red as the Sea

Rita Chang-Eppig. Bloomsbury, $28.99 (304p) ISBN 978-1-63973-037-7



Chang-Eppig debuts with a rollicking 19th-century adventure on the South China Sea. During a botched raid on a Portuguese merchant ship, pirate Cheng Yat, captain of the Red Banner Fleet, is killed by sailors who "had come prepared for war." In the aftermath, his wife, Shek Yeung, fears for her standing among her fellow outlaws. Cheung Po, Yat's adopted son, is the fleet's legal heir, and Yeung worries Po may take the opportunity to wrest control away from her. She convinces Po to marry her and agrees to bear him a son, believing their alliance is the only way to ensure the fleet's survival. Meanwhile, rumors circulate that the emperor has brought in a specialist to extinguish the threat of piracy. What follows is a bold and bloody showdown between the government and the pirate queen. The prose is lyrical ("Typhoons and cannonballs cared nothing for the complicated little folded cranes of feeling that beat their wings in the heart") and the plot is clever and serpentine, exploring questions of power, violence, gender, and fate. This is not to be missed. *(June)*

keep readers on the hook as it evolves and leads to a surprising outcome. This packs plenty of punch. *(June)*

Save What's Left

Elizabeth Castellano. Anchor, $26 (304p) ISBN 978-0-593-46917-0

Castellano turns the beach-read genre on its head in her clever debut. Fifty-nine-year-old Kathleen moves from Kansas to the little seaside town of Whitbey, N.Y., after her husband, Tom, makes the surprising announcement that he wants a divorce. Expecting a "bucolic paradise" and "small-town charm," Kathleen buys a waterfront oyster shack and drives across country, but instead of beachfront bliss, she finds a two-room shed with a leaking roof and a rotting bulkhead, next door to a McMansion-in-progress, a monstrosity the locals call the Sugar Cube. Soon she finds herself engaged in an impassioned, one-sided correspondence with the town supervisor, detailing her grievances regarding the massive construction project. She also inadvertently takes a side in a local turf war regarding the development of a vacant waterfront property. And rather than meeting a handsome stranger as she'd hoped, Kathleen is instead surprised when Tom shows up, having bailed on a cruise around the world and purchased an Airstream, which he parks in Kathleen's driveway. The plot, which culminates in some big, late-breaking twists, is a bit lopsided, but Kathleen's character and worldview are impeccably drawn, thanks to Castellano's idiosyncratic and assured voice. This witty send-up is a winner. *(June)*

The Impostor

Edgard Telles Ribeiro, trans. from the Portuguese by Kim M. Hastings and Margaret A. Neves. Bellevue Literary, $17.99 trade paper (192p) ISBN 978-1-954276-15-4

Brazilian writer Ribeiro (*His Own Man*) offers two elegant novellas, each an atmospherically charged investigation of consciousness, familial ties, legacy, and language. In the title work, the unnamed narrator, an elderly translator, recovers from a stroke, then takes a vacation to Naples in homage to an ancestor who, according to lore, fell into the volcano at Mount Vesuvius. The translator imagines what drew his ancestor from Brazil to the volcano in the early 20th century, and he calls himself an "inveterate traveler... wavering between the past and the future." Elizabeth, the narrator of "Blue Butterflies of the Amazon" has also had a stroke, leaving her paralyzed and mute. Her husband, Thomas, and daughter-in-law, Deborah, begin having sex with each other—sometimes right in front of her. Eventually, Deborah gets pregnant and later miscarries. The narration alternates between the novella's various characters, and though they're each distinctive, Elizabeth's is the most complex, as she notes how "forgiveness, hatred, and pleasure intertwine" within her while she watches the drama unfold. These crystalline stories form a memorable diptych. *Agent: Thomas Colchie, Colchie Agency. (June)*

Ponyboy

Eliot Duncan. Norton, $16.95 trade paper (224p) ISBN 978-1-324-05122-0

Duncan's triumphant and visceral debut follows a trans-masculine narrator wrestling with gender identity and drug use. Ponyboy, an American living in Paris, takes refuge in the consoling presence of Toni, a trans-woman childhood friend, while his girlfriend, Baby, is out of town. He also drinks heavily and uses cocaine, ketamine, molly, and whatever else he can get his hands on, yearning to be seen as a man (Baby would prefer him as a butch woman). A love triangle develops upon Baby's return, after she takes an interest in a man who assaulted Ponyboy. As Ponyboy slides deeper into addiction, he becomes alienated from the friends who

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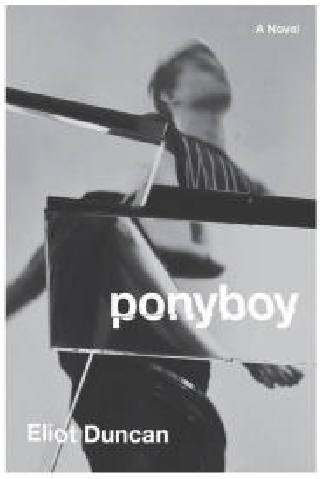


are trying to help him. The swirling narrative eventually finds Ponyboy back home in the Midwest for rehab, then with family in Vienna, and back in Paris, where he summons the courage to be himself. Duncan's writing can be indulgent—"Only a poet's voice will do. This is The Angel Natalie's. Coming here, wings long and true"—but he makes up for it with sinewy descriptions of Ponyboy's transition ("My movements are welding into a smoother, masculine strut") and by channeling Ponyboy's ache to transform ("I wanna make loud the parts they strangle," he writes in an email to real-life trans activist author Paul Preciado). Though a bit messy at times, this rings true. *(June)*

The Apartment

Ana Menéndez. Counterpoint, $29 (240p) ISBN 978-1-6400-9583-0

Menéndez (*Adios, Happy Homeland!*) explores the lives of a Miami apartment's tenants over 70 years in her ambitious if diffuse latest. In 1942, a hopeful new bride from San Antonio moves into 2B at the Helena, where her dreams of marital bliss are quashed by wartime tensions and abuse from her Army major husband. Menéndez then jumps to 1963, when Eugenio, a Cuban classical pianist reduced to playing weddings and nursing home gigs, has lived in 2B for the past 11 years. Eugenio contemplates his love of music after he hears about the death of a great Cuban composer. In 1972, a Vietnam War vet lives there among termite-eaten furniture left from previous tenants, his "head on fire" from memories of combat. And in 2010, 40-year-old Pilar packs up the place to move back in with her parents, unable to afford the spiking rent and calling herself a "victim of the financial crisis." Taking Pilar's place is a young Cuban refugee, whose fate impacts other tenants in surprising ways. A late foray into magical realism feels a bit hackneyed, and some of the time periods are more evocatively described than others. Still, Menéndez's nesting-doll narrative serves as a thoughtful meditation on the transient nature of home. Despite its flaws, this is worth a look. *(June)*

Poland, a Green Land

Aharon Appelfeld, trans. from the Hebrew by Stuart Schoffman. Schocken, $27 (240p) ISBN 978-0-8052-4361-1

Appelfeld (*To the Edge of Sorrow*), who died in 2018, offers an engrossing tale of a Jewish man's return to his ancestral village. Yaakov Fein has prospered since he turned his late parents' Tel Aviv textile business into a women's fashion shop, but he is struggling with an unhappy marriage and an empty nest. He's long wanted to visit Szydowce, Poland, the farming village where his parents were born and his grandparents and other Jews were murdered during WWII, and decides to finally make the trip. There, he's captivated by the green pastures and the swirling river, and by Magda, a beautiful farmer who knew his grandparents and tells him about his family. But the visit turns sour after he picks up on antisemitism from some locals, and the mayor attempts to extort him after he offers to buy the Jewish cemetery's broken tombstones. Appelfeld structures the narrative in dreamed conversations between Yaakov and his deceased mother, which offer an account of what his parents couldn't tell him when they were alive: that as a young married couple during WWII, they hid in cellars, a cowshed, and in the forest, and his grandparents were burned alive in their synagogue. The dreams are vivid and economically written, and the unsettling, unresolved ending adds heft. This powerful, bittersweet performance does not disappoint. *(June)*

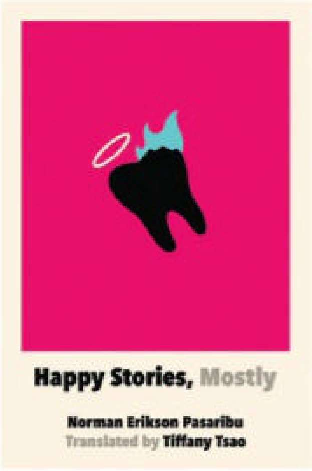
The Wife App

Carolyn Mackler. Simon & Schuster, $27.99 (352p) ISBN 978-1-982158-79-8

In Mackler's upbeat adult debut (after the middle grade novel *Not if I Can Help It*), three best friends monetize the domestic work done by wives and mothers. Lauren Zuckerman files for divorce after she finds out her husband, Eric, is visiting sex workers, while her divorced friend, Sophie Smart, has long moved on from her deadbeat ex, Joshua. Both men

★ Happy Stories, Mostly

Norman Erikson Pasaribu, trans. from the Indonesian by Tiffany Tsao. Feminist Press, $16.95 trade paper (160p) ISBN 978-1-952177-05-7



Poet Pasaribu makes their English-language debut with a remarkable collection of speculative and absurdist fiction incorporating Batak and Christian culture. In an introductory note, Pasaribu riffs on the Indonesian word *hampir* (almost), and its implications for queer people ("What does it mean to be almost happy? To almost get in, to be almost accepted, to be almost there"). "Ad maiorem dei gloriam" follows an elderly nun who routinely breaks the rules of her convent to wander outside its walls and lands a job as a nanny. In "Welcome to the Department of Unanswered Prayers," a recently deceased man joins the ranks of other dead people in the drab office referenced by the title, where workplace politics reign supreme. Pasaribu plumbs the depths of a Batak Protestant mother's guilt in "So What's Your Name, Sandra?" after she rejects her gay son and he dies by suicide. The free-spirited and worldly "A Young Poet's Guide to Surviving a Broken Heart," written in the second person, suggests funny and vital coping mechanisms for a poet's heartache and loneliness: "Try contacting your friends to see if they're up for dinner. Not at your place, because your room looks like a Pollock painting"). Readers will fall in love with this one. *Agent: Jayapriya Vasudevan, Jacaranda Literary Agency. (June)* have landed on their feet—Eric is now dating the babysitter, and Joshua's new wife is documenting their lives with glossy Instagram posts. Lauren and Sophie, meanwhile, struggle to make ends meet and still perform the lion's share of parenting, and their friend Madeline Wallace, who is independently wealthy, contends with her ex's attempt to gain custody of their children. Fed up, the women create an app to "right marital inequalities" that will allow users to pay for services that often fall to mothers. As the app picks up steam, the women fend off their meddling exes and seek to define themselves as independent women. While the writing is at times didactic ("What if marriage actually started this way, with frank conversations about division of labor," Madeline wonders), Mackler identifies many real, often unspoken problems inherent in domesticity. This one's worth picking up. *Agent: Jodi Reamer, Writers House. (June)*

You Can't Stay Here Forever

Katherine Lin. Harper, $28.99 (304p) ISBN 978-0-06-324143-5

Lin debuts with the thoughtful if uneven story of a 29-year-old lawyer's search for meaning after the death of her husband. Ellie Huang's seemingly perfect world is shattered after her husband, Ian, dies in a car accident. What's more, Ellie discovers during the funeral that Ian had been cheating on her. With an unexpectedly large life insurance payout in hand, Ellie flees to a posh hotel in the south of France, accompanied by longtime friend Mable Chou. The women spend their days swathed in luxury and befriend a couple, Fauna and Robbie. Ellie is particularly drawn to the latter—his "genuine warmth" makes her feel like she's talking to a therapist. Meanwhile, Ellie grapples with the "garden-variety racism" she's dealt with at her firm, where a senior partner repeatedly confuses her with another Asian woman, as well as microaggressions from others and conflicted feelings about her Asian immigrant mother. Some of Ellie's musings are insightful (worse than the racism, for Ellie, is that the partner doesn't know her), though others are a bit rote ("I like feeling as if other people are making my choices for me," she tells Fauna), and despite some drama from her attraction to Robbie, the plot fizzles. Nevertheless, Lin piles on the charm with Ellie and Mable's inside jokes and descriptions of the decadent setting. There's some fun to be had, but it's fleeting. *Agent: Elizabeth Bewley, Sterling Lord Literistic. (June)*

The Road to Dalton

Shannon Bowring. Europa, $18 trade paper (250p) ISBN 978-1-60945-926-0

Bowring captures in her compassionate debut the rhythms of life in small-town Maine. It's 1990 in Dalton, where the close-knit cast faces a series of problems. Rose Douglas, a waitress at the local diner, sees her doctor, Richard Haskell, after her fiancé assaults her, and blames herself for the abuse. Richard and his wife, Trudy, director of the Dalton library, have a companionable but loveless marriage; Trudy is fervently in love with Bev Theroux, whose husband, Bill, like Richard, is aware of their relationship but loath to separate from his wife. The Therouxs' son Nate and his wife Bridget have a new baby, Sophie, a happy event clouded by Bridget's postpartum depression. These and a handful of other characters, most prominently Sarah and Greg, who are struggling with the unique challenges of adolescence, form a colorful tapestry. By the end, an unexpected death touches everyone, a plot point that Bowring confidently steers away from melodrama, landing instead on poignant realism. Readers will want to take their time with this one. *(June)*

Watch Us Shine

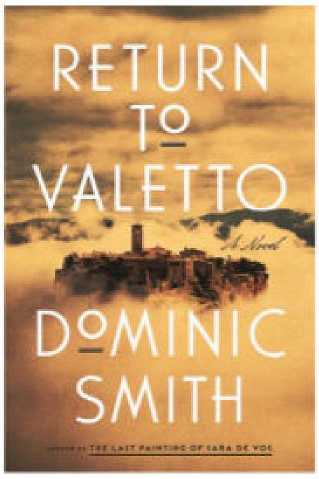
Marisa De Los Santos. Morrow, $27.99 (320p) ISBN 978-0-06-309560-1

De Los Santos revisits Cornelia Brown, heroine of *Love Walked In*, for a saccharine story of a mother's mysterious past. Cornelia, 44, is reeling after a man held a gun to her younger child's head in a grocery store. After she learns her mother, Eleanor, has been hit by a car, she packs up her two kids and drives south with her husband to Virginia to care for her. While Eleanor recovers in a rehab center, her memory begins to falter and she requests of Cornelia, "Bring me the northern lights." Baffled, Cornelia realizes how little she knows about her mother and enlists her sister and a friend to help understand the request. Flashbacks to the 1960s reveal details about Eleanor's sister, a kindhearted painter named Martha who writes to Eleanor about her boyfriend, who invites her to move with him to a utopian community of artists and writers. As Cornelia discovers a dark side to the utopia, she wrestles with the feeling that she can't protect her children from the dangers of the world. Unfortunately, the author's flatly drawn characters are depicted as either good or evil, and the cutesy conceits tend to grate. This one's for diehards only. *Agent: Jennifer Carlson, Dunow, Carlson & Lerner Literary Agency. (June)*

Return to Valetto

Dominic Smith. Farrar, Straus and Giroux, $28 (336p) ISBN 978-0-374-60768-5

Smith (*The Electric Hotel*) unspools an intriguing saga of wartime promises and trauma. In 2011, widower Hugh Fisher leaves his home in Michigan for a sabbatical in Valetto, the Umbrian village of his deceased Anglo Italian mother, Hazel. There, he discovers a chef named Elisa Tomassi occupying his mother's cottage, which he inherited. Elisa claims Hugh's resistance fighter grandfather gave it to her family while on his deathbed during WWII. Hugh's three widowed aunts, who never knew what happened to their father, call in lawyers to dispute Elisa's story. Hugh's 99-year-old grandmother, meanwhile, insists Hugh travel to the village where her husband was buried to get to the bottom of things. There, he meets Alessia, Elisa's mother, who spent part of the war as a child refugee in the Serafino villa. Alessia shares the decades-long correspondence she had with Hazel and reveals she and Hazel were tortured by Valetto's sole fascist party member, Silvio Ruffo. Hugh, shaken by what he's uncovered, returns to the villa and schemes with his aunts to confront Silvio, who is still alive at 96. The characters are vividly drawn, and the plot's low-grade tension

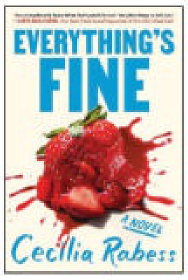


LOVE ON THE ROCKS

Two novelists combine social commentary with stories of messy romance.

Everything's Fine

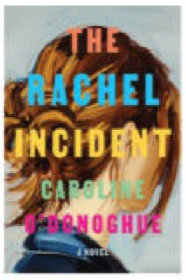
Cecilia Rabess. Simon & Schuster, $27.99 (328p) ISBN 978-1-982187-70-5



Rabess delivers a breezy yet unsettling debut about a liberal Black financial analyst who falls in love with a white Republican coworker. It's the middle of the Obama years and Jess Jones, newly hired at Goldman Sachs, runs into Josh Hillyer, an old college classmate with whom she used to argue over politics. To her surprise, they slowly become friends despite his conservative views as he mentors her and helps her navigate office politics as the only Black woman in the firm. Eventually, Josh leaves Goldman to work at a big-time trader's AI-powered firm, and he brings Jess along with him. Sparks inevitably fly between Jess and Josh as they try to work out their drastically different outlooks and backgrounds. Secrets are revealed, Jess gets in trouble with the boss, and everything comes to a head as the 2016 election approaches, building to a conclusion that lands as either shallowly romantic or an incendiary critique of capitalism, depending on the reader's interpretation. Rabess's humor is on-point, and the chemistry between the leads is electric; each scene involving them is fraught with a double-edged sword—after they hook up, Josh starts talking dirty and Jess responds, "Way to ruin the moment, you creepy loser," before they have sex again. This is sure to spark conversation. *(June)*

The Rachel Incident

Caroline O'Donoghue. Knopf, $28 (304p) ISBN 978-0-593-53570-7



In this smart and colorful outing from O'Donoghue (*Promising Young Women*), two 20-something roommates become enmeshed with an older married couple. It's 2009, and James Devlin, a Christmas temp at O'Conner Books in Cork, Ireland, initially clashes with his bookseller colleague Rachel Murray due to their class differences—Rachel is from a family of cosmetic dentists and bankers while James is from rough-and-tumble Manchester—though they soon become friends and rent a cottage together. After Rachel invites her former university professor Fred Byrne to give a reading at the store, his arrival with Deenie, his wife and publisher, adds intrigue, beginning with James encouraging Rachel to seduce Fred, Rachel entering a fraught friendship with Deenie, and James processing his on-and-off relationship with an emotionally unavailable man by writing a TV script. Along the way, there's a pregnancy and a plan for an abortion. In addition to the interpersonal drama, O'Donoghue pulls no punches in her depiction of the abortion crisis in Ireland during the period, showing how women either traveled abroad or resorted to illegal and potentially dangerous methods to terminate pregnancies. Key to it all is O'Donoghue's spot-on portrayal of Rachel's youthful yearning ("I was twenty and I needed two things: to be in love and to be taken seriously"). In O'Donoghue's world, there's plenty to fall in love with. *Agent: Bryony Woods, Diamond Kahn & Woods. (June)*

grows taut as Hugh works himself up to the final showdown. This intelligent family drama will keep readers turning the pages. *Agent: Emily Forland, Brandt & Hochman Literary. (June)*

Mystery/Thriller

The Pigeon: A Joe the Bouncer Novel

David Gordon. Mysterious, $17.95 trade paper (336p) ISBN 978-1-61316-405-1

In this violence-packed fifth Joe the Bouncer outing (after 2022's *The Wild Life*), Gordon delivers a too-busy, if appealingly left-field, crime caper. Joe, who grew up in "a clan of thieves and grifters" and passed through Harvard and the Special Forces, works as a bouncer at a Queens strip club, reading classic literature in his spare time. He's become a valued resource for New York City's Mafia families, and one day Gio, a Mafia boss, taps Joe for a job that at first seems easy: Brooklyn gangster Alonzo is distraught over the theft of his champion racing pigeon, Ramses, valued at over $1 million, and he believes that Wing Chow, a rich pigeon collector, is responsible. But when Joe's burglary of Chow's Upper West Side apartment goes south, he finds himself in the crosshairs of a league of assassins he must fight off—in, of course, hyperviolent fashion—if he wants to survive. Joe is a memorable creation, but Gordon overloads the plot with convoluted character motivations that detract from his gleefully gruesome set pieces. Admirers of humor-leavened antihero capers may enjoy themselves, but this isn't a shining example of the genre. *Agent: Douglas Stewart, Sterling Lord Literistic. (June)*

The Island of Lost Girls

Alex Marwood. Harper, $18.99 trade paper (480p) ISBN 978-0-06-328223-0

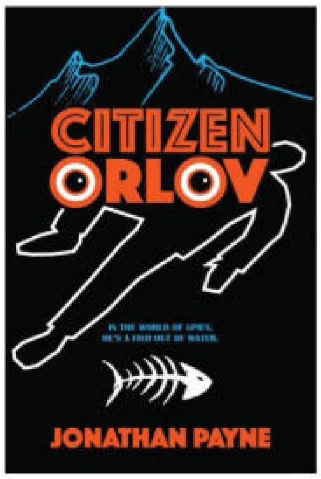
The idyllic Mediterranean isle of La Kastellana is fictional, but much of what transpires there is all too real in this disturbing thriller from Edgar winner Marwood (*The Poison Garden*). The three-decade-hopping narrative starts in July 1985, when London-based tycoon Matthew Reade docks his yacht in La Kastellana, planning to develop the unspoiled setting into "the New Capri," and his bored 13-year-old daughter Tatiana seizes on local Mercedes Delia, just a few months younger, as the plaything she must secure for the summer. This proves a devil's bargain for Mercedes, who remains trapped in a web with Tatiana and her father into adulthood as a powerless witness to the abuses inflicted on the barely legal beauties they groom for the delectation of

Matthew and his cronies. Meanwhile, an undercover Europol investigation of human trafficking zeroes in on La Kastellana, and in 2016, a desperate British mother arrives on the island in a last-ditch effort to find her runaway 17-year-old daughter. Marwood builds her ripped-from-the-headlines premise into something sprawling and admirably ambitious. The suspenseful results should satisfy readers with stomachs strong enough to handle the gruesome details. *Agent: Laetitia Rutherford, Watson, Little. (June)*

★ Citizen Orlov

Jonathan Payne. CamCat, $26.99 (288p) ISBN 978-0-744309-01-0

Set in an unnamed central European kingdom at the end of WWI, Payne's stellar debut pokes hilarious fun at spy fiction through the exploits of a fishmonger named Orlov. Taking a shortcut through an alley one day, Orlov becomes concerned that the phone he hears ringing in a government office remains unanswered. He enters the room it's in through an open window, picks up the call, and gets a cryptic "life and death" message he's told to convey to someone named Agent Kosek. When Orlov sets off through the building to look for Kosek, he's mistaken for a potential operative himself and, despite being wholly clueless, is paired up with another agent on a covert assignment to protect the king from assassins. As their mission progresses, the well-meaning but bumbling Orlov finds himself enmeshed deeper and deeper in plots he doesn't understand. The blend of action and picaresque buffoonery flatteringly calls Conan Doyle's Brigadier Gerard tales to mind, and Payne pulls off a genuinely surprising conclusion. This announces a bright new voice in comic suspense. *(June)*



The Traitor Beside Her

Mary Anna Evans. Poisoned Pen, $16.99 trade paper (368p) ISBN 978-1-4642-1558-2

Evans follows up *The Physicists' Daughter* with a lackluster second thriller featuring factory worker Justine Byrne. In 1944, U.S. Army Intelligence recruits Justine to Virginia's Arlington Hall, a women's college that's been transformed into an American code-breaking facility. Despite her gifts for cryptanalysis, Justine's handler, Paul, hasn't stationed her there to crack enemy messages—he's certain that Arlington Hall has been infiltrated by an enemy agent who has already disrupted the Allied war efforts and caused several deaths, and he wants her to ferret out the traitor. That traitor may also be responsible for the strangulation of a woman working for the head of the German code-cracking division. Justine's mole hunt, interspersed with her fending off unwelcome suitors as she embarks on a relationship with Paul, packs a certain amount of inherent drama, but it's largely undone by thin characters and purple prose ("Justine would always wonder if anyone saw her face when the first light of realization began to dawn"). Maisie Dobbs this is not. *Agent: Anne Hawkins, John Hawkins & Assoc. (June)*

You Can Trust Me

Wendy Heard. Bantam, $28 (304p) ISBN 978-0-593-59931-0

Heard (*The Kill Club*) smartly engages with questions of gender, privilege, and accountability in this rousing thriller. Pickpocket Summer, deserted by her mother as a teen, picked up fellow grifter Leo one day while both were panhandling. In the five years since, they've traveled around California running scams on rich marks. Leo hopes to convert the billionaire philanthropist Michael Forrester's interest in her Instagram account into a cash cow, but when Leo fails to contact Summer after her and Michael's date, Summer cozies up to one of Michael's confidants so she can gain access to his private research island and search for her missing friend, turning up potentially deadly secrets in the process. Heard follows the women separately, on slightly different timelines, peppering in flashbacks to their early lives without breaking the real-time tension of the main plot, and ably balances an anxious sense the women are in over their heads with satisfying moments highlighting their resourcefulness, all integrated into a story that packs more surprises than the setup initially promises. Readers will want to ride with Summer and Leo all the way to the end. *Agent: Lauren Spieller, Triada US Literary. (June)*

Second Shot

Cindy Dees. Kensington, $27 (320p) ISBN 978-1-4967-3975-9

CIA assassin Helen Warwick's hopes to ease into retirement are dashed when she's pulled back into the business in this diverting if uneven thriller from Dees (*Beyond the Limit*). One night, four assassins attack Helen out of the blue. She kills three of them, but one escapes, leaving her to wonder who ordered the hit and why. Meanwhile, two serial killers seem to be prowling the D.C. streets—one kills his victims and poses their corpses in scenes that mimic famous works of art, another finds ingenious ways to frame innocent people for his kills. Helen gets roped into both investigations and fears they may have connections with enemies she made during her time with the CIA. Helen is an endearing heroine, always reminding those around her that she shouldn't be doing any of this at age 55, but the adventure she's thrown into is cluttered and overstuffed. Dees manages a final note that's satisfying enough on its own but fails to bring the plot's many threads to graceful resolution. This will mainly appeal to readers who like their thrillers light and don't mind a little mess. *Agent: Nicole Resciniti, Seymour Agency. (June)*

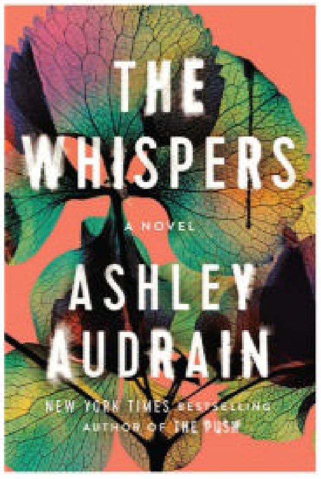
Marion Lane and the Raven's Revenge

T.A. Willberg. Park Row, $18.99 trade paper (352p) ISBN 978-0-7783-3419-4

Willberg's overstuffed third fantasy-adventure featuring 25-year-old apprentice detective Marion Lane (after 2022's *Marion Lane and the Deadly Rose*) suffers from a lack of focus. In 1960 London, Marion is nearly ready to graduate from bookseller-turned-detective Miss Brickett's Investigation and Inquiries bureau, the headquarters of which rests, Bond-like, beneath the city streets, complete with a gadgetry department. When a dead raven is mysteriously delivered to the bureau, Marion believes it is a message meant for her; her mother, Alice,

★ The Whispers

Ashley Audrain. Viking/Dorman, $28 (342p) ISBN 978-1-984881-69-1



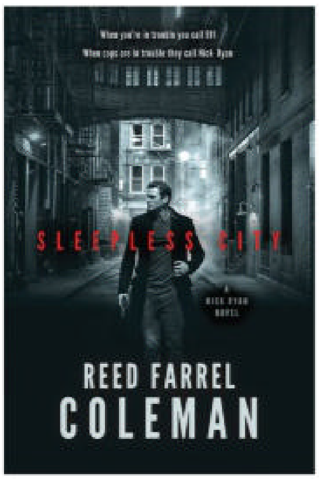
Audrain (*The Push*) takes a deep dive into the secret lives of women in this standout work of literary suspense. Everything will change for four families in an upscale neighborhood after 10-year-old Xavier Loverly falls from his bedroom window and ends up in the hospital in critical condition. The ER physician handling his case is neighbor Rebecca Parry, who runs interference between police and Xavier's overwhelmed mother, Whitney, whose seeming ability to juggle a corporate consulting firm, a husband, and three kids has made her the envy of the neighborhood. As Whitney maintains a vigil at her son's bedside, whispers swell about what might have led to Xavier's fall, and the truth emerges twist by twist from a quartet of narrators. In addition to Whitney and Rebecca, whose professionalism masks private sorrows, Audrain takes readers inside the minds of Whitney's best friend, Blair Parks, a stay-at-home mom who suspects her husband is straying, and octogenarian Mara Alvaro, a relic from pre-gentrification days when the neighborhood was full of Portuguese immigrants. The novel soars via Audrain's clever revelations of the ways her protagonists' lives are linked in ways they never suspected. Both artful and pulse pounding, this isn't easily shaken. *Agent: Maddy Milburn, Madeleine Milburn Ltd. (June)*

received a similar warning before her death a decade earlier. Meanwhile, local businessman and philanthropist Oscar Biggar is strangled in a crowded public square, an event that leaves the police baffled. Marion believes Biggar's death confirms the return of the raven-obsessed killer who murdered her mother and sets out to investigate, opening old wounds as she circles in on a criminal who might be closer to her than she thinks. Willberg packs in plenty of action, but manages little tension, slowed as the novel is by momentum-stalling backstory. Series fans may enjoy reuniting with the characters and reveling in some outlandish gadgetry, but newbies need not apply. *Agent: Hayley Steed, Madeleine Millburn Literary. (June)*

Sleepless City: A Nick Ryan Novel

Reed Farrel Coleman. Blackstone, $26.99 (322p) ISBN 978-1-9826-2747-8

Anthony Award winner Coleman (the Moe Prager series) introduces an intriguing lead with this timely and accomplished series launch. Following in the footsteps of his father, who blew the whistle on an entire police precinct that protected drug dealers, NYPD Detective Nick Ryan is devoted to serving the city even if it means alienating his corrupt colleagues. When Ryan spots fellow officers spiriting a Black man away from a march protesting the police shooting of an unarmed man, Ryan intervenes. That brings him to the attention of a shady character who identifies himself only as Joe and offers Ryan reassignment to a new unit charged with doing things "that can't be done in the open" and has unlimited resources thanks to a mysterious benefactor. Ryan eventually agrees, but the assignment turns hazardous when a cop hangout is bombed and Ryan starts to question Joe and his benefactor's motives. Coleman captures the racial tensions of present-day New York City perfectly and offers a memorable, complicated hero in Ryan. Robert Daley fans will be eager for a sequel. *(June)*


When you're in trouble you call 911
When cops are in trouble they call Nick Ryan
SLEEPLESS CITY
A NICK RYAN NOVEL
REED FARREL COLEMAN

A Botanist's Guide to Flowers and Fatality

Kate Khavari. Crooked Lane, $27.99 (352p) ISBN 978-1-63910-278-5

Floriography helps uncover a killer in Khavari's appealing if uneven second Saffron Everleigh mystery (following 2022's *A Botanist's Guide to Flowers and Poisons*). In 1923 London, Saffron has rejected her suffocating aristocratic background to pursue her passion: botany. Shortly after she and her research partner, Michael Lee, return from treating a child poisoned by an innocent-looking white flower, a local detective inspector recruits the two to consult on a pair of murders; in each case, the dead woman received a strange bouquet. Saffron, using the Victorian-era practice of floriography, analyzes the flowers' "meanings" to help decode the murderer's intent, all while being pulled into a romantic triangle with the arrogant Michael and a moody biologist. The sexual tension between the three, though, feels as if it exists to create additional conflict rather than emerging naturally from the characters. The novel sings when Saffron is searching fields and gardens, scrutinizing plants, and studying archaic floral meanings, and Khavari also gets in some gleeful jabs at snobbish academics. Historical mystery fans will want to see where Saffron goes from here. *(June)*

What Remains

Wendy Walker. Blackstone, $27.99 (286p) ISBN 979-8-200-87252-7

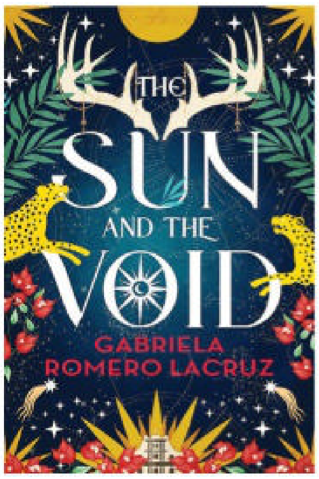
Det. Elise Sutton is in a Connecticut department store when shots ring out in this middling thriller from Walker (*American Girl*). Near the dressing rooms, she spies an armed 20-something man taking aim at a tall, frightened man. Elise—a cold case investigator—kills the gunman before he can claim a single life, but despite being hailed as a hero, she's wracked with guilt for doing so. The man she saved doesn't give a statement, so Elise seeks him out and is relieved when his account vindicates her actions. She soon discovers, however, that the man started stalking her post-shooting, and nearly everything he told her was a lie, including his name. When he begins threatening Elise's husband, police partner, and daughters, Elise realizes he won't stop unless she makes him. Walker intercuts Elise's first-person-present narration with chapters detailing an investigation into human remains found in a hunting shelter's cremation oven, though the subplot feels awkwardly shoehorned in. And though Elise's stalker is terrifying, her reactions to his escalations strain credibility, blunting the story's impact. Walker has done much better. *Agent: Elisabeth Weed, Book Group. (June)*

SF/Fantasy/Horror

★ The Sun and the Void

Gabriela Romero Lacruz. Orbit, $18.99 trade paper (432p) ISBN 978-0-316-33654-3

Romero Lacruz debuts and launches her Warring Gods series with a spellbinding sapphic epic fantasy about two young women navigating a world steeped in prejudice, folklore, and ancient magic. When Reina Duvianos, a "half-nozariel in a country hostile to her kind," receives a summons from her estranged, magic-wielding grandmother, Doña Ursulina Duvianos, she sets off across the treacherous mountains. On the way, she is attacked by some supernatural creatures and Doña Ursulina saves her life, leaving Reina indebted to her grandmother—and determined to stay in the powerful witch's favor. Meanwhile, Eva Kesaré, "bastard born and ugly," is shunned by her family because of her own affinity for magic. The arrival of Rahmagut's Claw, an astrological event that leaves the veil between the human world and the gods at its thinnest, puts Reina and Eva in each other's paths as Doña Ursulina schemes to summon the god of the Void to grant her more power. Both heroines search for a sense of belonging in a treacherous, colonized world where magic (called "geomancy") is deeply tied to the earth. The lush worldbuilding and delightful blend of love, betrayal, and curses set the stage for a powerful and promising new series. This is a gem. *Agent: Naomi Davis, BookEnds Literary. (July)*



At the End of Every Day

Arianna Reiche. Atria, $27.99 (288p) ISBN 978-1-66800-794-5

Reiche's slippery debut adds to the niche but growing genre of horror novels set in theme parks. Delphi Baxter has worked in a vast and immensely popular Disney Land–style amusement park for years as both a handler of guests and maintenance worker, alongside her long-term boyfriend, Brendan, who plays one of the park's princes. The park is the first place Delphi's felt at home after a childhood trauma. Then comes the death of a celebrity on its grounds and a failed attempt to replace the clumsy automaton attractions with more advanced robotics. News quickly arrives that the park is shuttering, and Delphi's life begins to break down. She stays committed to her job while she still has it, but as the park's shutdown begins, Brendan acts strangely, odd people roam the grounds, and it becomes increasingly apparent that either something is wrong with the park or Delphi is losing her mind—or both. Reiche uses both unreliable narrators and the occasional epistolary chapter to create an ethereal, hard-to-pin-down world. This style may go a little too far sometimes, but succeeds in creating a dreamlike, unsettling narrative that frequently slides into the uncanny valley. Readers are in for an eerie, psychological roller-coaster ride. *Agent: Liz Parker, Verve Talent & Literary. (July)*

The Deep Sky

Yume Kitasei. Flatiron, $29.99 (416p) ISBN 978-1-250-87533-4

Kitasei sets her action-packed near-future debut against the backdrop of impending human extinction. In the face of global warfare, terrorism, and ecological collapse, the ambitious EvenStar project offers humanity a chance to start fresh, sending the spaceship *Phoenix* to colonize a new world. Asuka is selected for the crew from the crème de la crème of Earth's youth, but she grapples with imposter syndrome, convinced that her crewmates are all more competent and deserving than she is. When she fails to conceive a child en route, a critical component of the mission, it only compounds her feelings of failure and inadequacy. An explosion throws the *Phoenix* off course, prompting concerns there may be a terrorist aboard the ship. When suspicion lands on Asuka, she must—with the aid of a buggy and enigmatic AI—find a way to clear her name and keep all hell from breaking loose on the cramped ship. Frequent flashbacks to Asuka's past on Earth interrupt this tense spacefaring mystery, and though some readers may find this distracting, they add necessary context for and complexity to the resilient heroine. The result is a remarkable story of endurance and hope. *Agent: Mary C. Moore, Kimberley Cameron & Assoc. (July)*

★ Emergent Properties

Aimee Ogden. Tordotcom, $16.99 trade paper (128p) ISBN 978-1-250-86681-3

From Nebula finalist Ogden (*Sun-Daughters, Sea-Daughters*) comes a fresh speculative novella of sentient, autonomous AI. Through protagonist Scorn, "an independently operating robot unregistered to any other sentient entity," Ogden raises questions familiar to nonrobot readers: what does it mean to be human? How can one emerge from the pressure and expectations of one's parents as an independent individual? Scorn, whose pronouns are ze, zem, and zir, has two parents, Mum and Maman, a human couple who built zem and have since divorced. The women, both high powered tech CEOs, programmed Scorn with "a model of intelligence... centered on a novelty-driven approach, cycles of explore-and-exploit learning," but never expected zem to evolve so far beyond their control. Indeed, Scorn bucks their wishes that ze contribute to their companies and instead becomes an investigative reporter, a gig that sends zem on a mission to the moon by way of Italy on the trail of a scandal. There, however, someone wipes Scorn's memory of the past 10 days, leaving zem to reconstruct zir mission from virtually nothing. It's a twisty mystery that doubles as a potent, surprising, and necessary exploration of the many issues that arise from AI's ever-increasing presence in the world. *(July)*

Dark Water Daughter

H.M. Long. Titan, $16.95 trade paper (464p) ISBN 978-1-80336-260-1

Long (*Barrow of Winter*) gets the Winter Sea series off to a rocky start with a slow-moving nautical fantasy adventure set in a Jacobian England-inspired world in which Stormsingers, witches who can control the weather through song, are immensely valuable to naval captains and pirates alike. The plot kicks off when stormsinger Mary Firth is mistaken for a notorious criminal and makes a daring escape from public execution with help from her criminal companion Charles Grant. Charles later betrays her, however, using Mary to pay his debts to men who put her up for auction. She's first bought by the abusive Captain Randalf, then kidnapped by infamous pirate Silvanus Lirr, who also keeps Mary's mother as his Stormsinger. Finally, Mary escapes and joins forces with pirate James Demery, a dubious ally, to free her mother and get revenge. Along the way, she begins to question her identity, unraveling a mystery from her past. After a strong start, the narrative gradually loses momentum, bogged down in worldbuilding details about half-baked Lovecraftian creatures called ghistings. While these monsters may have more to do in future books, their presence here does little more than pull the focus from Mary's quest, leaving scant room for Long to explore her abilities. Fantasy readers will be underwhelmed. *(July)*

The Dead Man and Other Horror Stories

Gene Wolfe. Subterranean, $50 (400p) ISBN 978-1-64524-120-1

Those familiar with SFWA Grand Master Wolfe (1931–2019) only from his science-fantasy novels will be pleasantly surprised by this collection of 28 convention-subverting horror shorts. These twisty tales often end somewhere very different from where they began. "In The House of Gingerbread" begins with an evocative fairy tale opening, "The woodcutter came up the walk, and the ornate old house watched him through venetian-blinded eyes," but it shifts gears when Tina Heim opens the door, becoming a police procedural: Tina has been implicated in the suspicious deaths of her husband and child. From there, multiple satisfying plot twists alter the reader's impressions of both Tina and the Grimm source material. In the chilling "Redbeard," a friend of the narrator's relates the blighted history of

[Q&A]

PW TALKS WITH GABRIELA ROMERO LACRUZ

Antlers and Alchemy

Heroines Eva and Reina work together to foil the plans of a powerful sorceress in Romero Lacruz's Latin American folklore–infused debut, *The Sun and the Void* (Orbit, July; reviewed on p. 46).

What was your approach to incorporating history into your worldbuilding?

When I was writing the book, I mostly just wanted to make sure that the world felt lived in. I wanted it to feel like a real place, you know? I didn't set out saying, okay, this is going to be a fantasy that's historically accurate. But I was also really inspired by other high fantasy stories that use a real-world backdrop to inform the universe where they're set. So my inspiration was post-colonial Colombia during the war of independence in the early 19th century. I even sprinkled in a couple of characters, like for example Samón is directly inspired by Simón Bolívar, but it's not an attempt to be historically accurate.

© HASSAN SEFIDROU

How did you develop your unique, rock-based magic system?

I'm a chemical engineer, and people always say to write what you know. I was trying to figure out how I could fit my training into my fiction, so I decided to use a magic system that had a chemistry feel. It's not a direct alchemy system but it kind of feels that way. Litio, galio, and bismuto are lithium, gallium, and bismuth. I was just looking up cool earth metals!

What inspired the novel's fantasy races, the valcos and the nozariels?

I wanted to have fantasy races, just like elves and orcs, but not elves and orcs. I wanted to make my own. So I decided to use antlers, as they're a popular motif in musica llanera, or music from the llanos [grassland plains of Colombia and Venezuela]. Then it kind of evolved naturally from that: two races with animal qualities. I wanted the valcos to be strong and to have antlers. For the nozariels, I thought, "Oh, what if they have a tail?" But because this is a society that gets colonized by humans, the proper way to appear physically is to have a human appearance. So cutting off the tail is a way to subjugate and enslave nozariels. And even after slavery is abolished and they're "free" to do whatever they want, the nozariels continue to cut off their tails as a way to pass in this society. I thought that readers could potentially draw interesting parallels with the passing we all have to do.

Half-valco Eva and half-nozariel Reina come from very different backgrounds but have similar experiences. Tell me more about their relationship.

I wanted to tell the story from the points of views of two different creatures but also have them both struggle with the fact that they're half-blood and feel that they have one foot in each world but are not welcome in either. That's the experience I grew up with, and so I gave that experience to Eva and Reina.

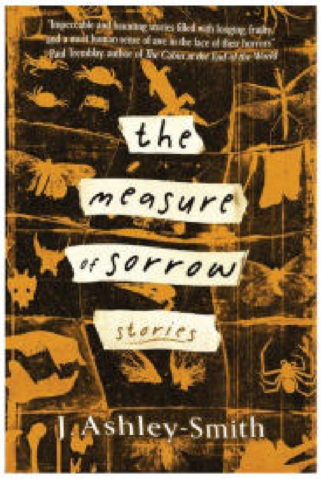
—LAURA MARTINEZ

an abandoned house in a rural area and ends by raising difficult questions about the nature of responsibility for another's actions. In "The Vampire Kiss," a street urchin explains his unusual association with another's dinner preparations by narrating the terrifying circumstances of witnessing his parents' deaths, apparently from a ghost that drained their blood. These forgotten tales from a genre titan form the perfect complement to 2010's *The Best of Gene Wolfe: A Definitive Retrospective of His Finest Short Fiction*. (*June*)

★ The Measure of Sorrow: Stories

J. Ashley-Smith. Meerkat, $17.95 trade paper (202p) ISBN 978-1-946154-77-4

The debut collection from Ashley-Smith (*Ariadne, I Love You*) proves that he can pack just as much of a punch in short horror fiction as in his Shirley Jackson Award–winning longer work. Throughout these 10 stories, his talent for scene-setting especially shines; the inherent alienation of the rural Australian settings of "The Family Madness" and "The Measure of Sorrow" do as much to enhance their protagonists' breaks with reality as the teeming, humid rainforest lends to the collapsing rot of one man's life in "Our Last Meal." The bushfire-charred moonscape of once-familiar picnic grounds exists in deeply uncanny parallel to a mostly destroyed family trying to survive however they can in "Old Growth," and a flood-rotted dream house falls out from under a mother-to-be in "The Moth Tapes." Perhaps best of all is "The Black Massive," set in England, in the gray edge between the city and the fens, where two teenage ravers fall in with a man offering them chemical escape, a beat they can dance to, and an introduction to the darkness of the void beyond death. For lovers of voicey, elegant prose that lingers for days in the corners of the mind, this is highly recommended. (*June*)



Morgan Is My Name

Sophie Keetch. Random House Canada, $17.99 trade paper (368p) ISBN 978-1-03-900649-2

Keetch's debut adds to the ever-growing subgenre of feminist reimaginings of the lives of villainous women from myth and legend with a balanced take on Camelot's Morgan le Fay. Named Morgan (or "sea-born," in Welsh) after the sea that her mother, Lady Igraine, claims helped bring Morgan into the world, she and her two older sisters grow up happy at Tintagel—until their father dies. Lady Igraine is compelled to remarry King Uther, and from there Morgan's life takes a turn for the worse, though she still ekes out moments of happiness in an affair with a squire. When her transgressions are discovered, she is banished to a nunnery, but Igraine ensures that she receive a decent education, and Morgan's increasing knowledge of the healing arts sets her on a path toward magic. As Morgan's power grows, so too does her desire for freedom and independence, pitting her against the men who try to control her. With equal attention to politics and witchcraft, Keetch's exploration of Morgan's growth shows how the perspective of men has warped the character over the years. Fans of Arthurian legends retold will not want to miss this. *Agent: Marina de Pass, Soho Agency.* (*June*)

Night's Edge

Liz Kerin. Nightfire, $26.99 (288p) ISBN 978-1-250-83567-3

Vampires are given a brutal yet refreshing update in this addictive outing from Kerin (*The Phantom Forest*) that's equal parts horror thriller and bildungsroman. The narration jumps between past and present: in 2010, fifth grader Mia's mother, Izzy, catches a vampiric condition from her emotionally manipulative boyfriend, Devon. Forced into a caregiving role, Mia learns the ins and outs of her mother's condition and that keeping it quiet means keeping others at arm's length. In the present, 20-something Mia dreams of escaping their codependent dynamic and beginning a relationship with a beautiful barista named Jade—until Devon reappears and threatens to destroy the fragile life Mia's spent more than a decade building. Kerin's prose is razor-sharp, and the fraught mother-daughter relationship at the heart of the novel is devastatingly rendered. It's a fast-paced story with rich, complex characters, making the cliffhanger ending especially frustrating—but only because readers will be desperate to see how all the blood comes out in the wash. Vampire fans looking for a fresh take on the monsters should snap this up. (*June.*)

Everything the Darkness Eats

Eric Larocca. Clash, $18.95 trade paper (226p) ISBN 978-1-955904-27-8

Larocca (*We Can Never Leave This Place*) hinges the plot of his disappointing latest on the farfetched premise that God is a glowing orb of energy sequestered in the basement of a Connecticut mansion, waiting for Heart Crowley, the mansion's devious owner, to return it to Heaven. At least that's what Crowley tells grieving widower Ghost Everling. Crowley has been abducting locals from the town of Henley's Edge to act as sacrifices in this obscure scheme to no avail, but believes that in skeptical Ghost he's found the perfect supplicant. Larocca's tale unfolds with the promise of a classic small-town horror story, but it frequently bogs down in purple prose: one character walks out of the room on another, "abandoning him the way napalm-scented civilians would single-file march from their burning homelands, forming a glorious diaspora"; another despairs to find "her mind, once a lavish rose bed, now reduced to an emptying gutter that swine wouldn't even consider drinking from." Combined with a (literal) deus ex machina ending, this is strictly for the author's most dedicated fans. *Agent: Priya Doraswamy, Lotus Lane Literary.* (*June*)

Romance/Erotica

In Charm's Way

Lana Harper. Berkley, $17 trade paper (304p) ISBN 978-0-593-63796-8

Harper's powerful, sapphic fourth Witches of Thistle Grove paranormal romance explores the lasting effects of trauma and rage. Following the events of *Back in a Spell*, Delilah Harlow is still suffering from an overblown oblivion spell and holding steadfast in her anger against its caster, her friend Nina Blackmoore, despite Nina's remorse. Delilah loses large chunks of memory at inopportune times and struggles with both spellcasting and identifying household items. Having exhausted all natural remedies, she turns to dangerous dark grimoires. Before she gets too far down this path, however, she meets Catriona "Cat" Quinn, a new-to-town monster hunter whose timing is suspiciously good, especially after a series of monsters suddenly begin targeting Delilah. As Delilah and Cat grow closer, Delilah's fear of intimacy drives her away from her friends and family, until her fate lies entirely in Cat's hands outside the safe bubble of Thistle Grove. But can Cat be trusted? This addition to the series successfully unearths more mystery and intrigue beneath the surface of Harper's paranormal world and adds layers to the ensemble of characters readers have grown to love. Newcomers may struggle to connect with Delilah without knowing her backstory, but series readers will not be disappointed. *Agent: Taylor Haggerty, Root Literary. (Aug.)*

The Curse of Saints

Kate Dramis. Sourcebooks Casablanca, $17.99 trade paper (480p) ISBN 978-1-72828-963-2

A queen's lethal spy discovers dark magic in Dramis's dense and befuddling romantasy debut and series launch. Aya's sharp operative skills and devotion to her kingdom, Tala, has earned her the rank of the Queen's Third, a role she loves even though it means she must fight alongside her archrival, Will. Then Kakos, the continent's "ostracized southern kingdom," invades Tala, and in the ensuing skirmish Aya reacts instinctively in a moment of desperation, unleashing dangerous magic she didn't know she possessed. When the queen learns of her power, she sends Aya and Will to the Western Kingdom, Trahir, to hone Aya's skills and become Tala's greatest weapon. War is still brewing and relations with Trahir are shaky at best, so Aya and Will must tread carefully if they are going to make it out alive. Dramis's expansive world is challenging to grasp, with both a byzantine magic system and intricate political scheming to untangle. The enemies-to-lovers romance between Will and Aya, meanwhile, suffers from a lack of chemistry, making it difficult to believe both their animosity and their eventual love. Readers will hope for more cohesion in book two. *Agent: Jessica Killingley, BKS Agency. (July)*

Kiss Me, Mi Amor

Alana Quintana Albertson. Berkley, $17 trade paper (304p) ISBN 978-0-593-33624-3

Albertson sparkles in her second Love and Tacos romance (after *Ramón and Julieta*), a riff on *The Taming of the Shrew*. First-generation Mexican American Carolina Flores is one of California's "top female farmers," but her life is dominated by her conservative father, with whom she lives and who is so old-school that he won't allow her younger sisters to date until Carolina finds a boyfriend. Enter Enrique Montez, a third-generation Mexican American and heir to fast food empire Taco King, who hopes to strike a partnership with Carolina's farm. Carolina is uninterested—until her father mistakes him for her boyfriend and Enrique agrees to play along. After a storm strands the pair in Carmel overnight, however, Carolina's father claims she's shamed the family by spending the night with a man and kicks her out. Newly independent, Carolina must discover who she is without her father making all her choices for her—and where Enrique fits into her future. Albertson's refreshing, nuanced tale captivates, exploring issues of racial identity, immigrant culture, and breaking free from abusive dynamics—and offering tasty descriptions of tacos along the way. A strong supporting cast (especially Carolina's sassy younger sister Blanca) adds to the fun. Readers will be enchanted. *(July)*

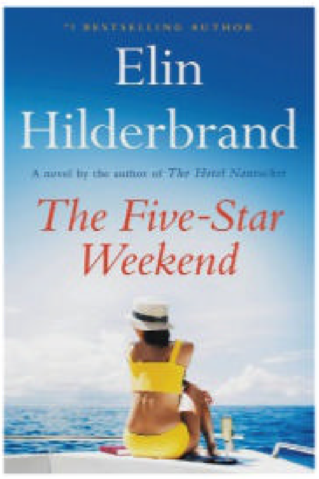
Second Chance at the Orchard Inn

Heather McGovern. Forever, $8.99 mass market (480p) ISBN 978-1-5387-3746-0

In McGovern's tender second Orchard Inn romance (after *Something Blue*), chef Aurora Shipley leaves her high-pressure restaurant job in L.A. to help her sisters get the family's Texas Hill Country Orchard Inn back on solid footing. While in town, she studiously avoids her first love Jude Jones, who broke her heart at the end of high school and stayed in Texas to run his family farm. After his sister forces a meetup at the farmer's market, however,

★ The Five-Star Weekend

Elin Hilderbrand. Little, Brown, $30 (384p) ISBN 978-0-316-25877-7



In this stunning, sun-drenched mix of romance and women's fiction from bestseller Hilderbrand (*The Hotel Nantucket*), famous food blogger Hollis Shaw gathers one important woman from each decade of her life for an unforgettable girls' trip to Nantucket. Reeling from her husband's sudden death in a car accident, Hollis is trying to make sense of their marriage, which had been failing; cope with her teen daughter's resentment; and figure out plans for her upended future when she stumbles across the idea for a "five-star weekend" online and sets about recruiting friends. Her best friend from childhood, Tatum, who still lives on Nantucket, is reluctant to renew their friendship, particularly when she knows that Hollis's college roommate, Dru Ann, a high-powered sports agent whom she fought with at Hollis's wedding, will be in attendance. Meanwhile, Hollis's friend from her 30s, Brooke, always tries too hard to fit in, filling her with anxiety that colors her interactions with the other, seemingly more self-confident women. Hollis also invites an internet friend whom she connected with through her blog and has never met in person. Hilderbrand makes the most of gathering these big personalities in Hollis's small, photograph-ready abode; as they navigate their differences, the women discover things about themselves—and may even find love along the way. This should become a beach bag staple. *Agent: David Forrer and Michael Carlisle, InkWell Management. (June)* the old lovers break the ice and Jude shares his dreams of opening a farm-to-table restaurant, something Aurora is uniquely qualified to advise him on. Unfortunately, his ailing, opinionated father firmly opposes Jude's innovative ideas, just like he opposed Jude's relationship with Aurora in high school. When Jude apologizes to Aurora for the way he broke things off, old wounds start to heal, and mutual affection and attraction make staying just friends challenging. Then Aurora is offered a chef job in Malibu and must reevaluate her priorities. Subplots about complicated parental relationships add depth to this predictable but satisfying tale. Anyone looking for sweet small-town romance will be pleased. This edition includes the bonus novella "Only Home" by Jeannie Chin. *Agent: Emily Sylvan Kim, Prospect Agency. (June)*

Four Weddings and a Duke

Michelle McLean. Entangled Amara, $8.99 mass market (416p) ISBN 978-1-64937-329-8

With this distinguished standalone Regency, McLean (*To Trust a Thief*) explores the fraught arranged marriage between a scientifically minded duke and an erstwhile wallflower. When bookish, antisocial Alex Reddington unexpectedly steps into his brother's shoes as Duke of Beaubrooke, he also inherits a marriage contract with the Wynnburn family and must choose which of their three daughters to wed. Alex proposes to the shy, overlooked, and somewhat socially awkward middle daughter, Lavinia, hoping he's found a wife who will leave him to his studies and won't force him to participate in society. Lavinia, meanwhile, is overjoyed that someone finally noticed her and sets about to become the perfect duchess—which of course includes hosting and attending parties. Though Lavinia schedules the events around Alex's research, their fundamental miscommunication leads to frustration and hurt on both sides, even as real feelings develop between them. Propelled forward by both a host of misunderstandings and some passionate interludes, the fast-moving plot offers plenty of enjoyment. Readers will especially cheer for Lavinia as she comes into her own and embraces love. *Agent: Janna Bonikowski, Knight Agency. (June)*

Summer's Gift

Jennifer Ryan. Avon, $18.99 trade paper (384p) ISBN 978-0-06-309415-4

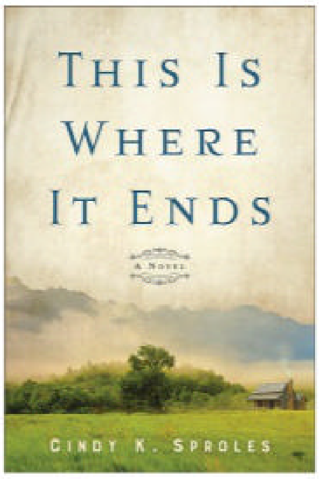
Bestseller Ryan (*Surrendering to Hunt*) takes readers on an emotional journey of familial reconciliation in this dramatic contemporary romance. Summer Sutherland, 25, is miserable. She has financial security and privilege thanks to her adoring business mogul grandfather, but she's never felt a sense of stability or belonging. Due to her flighty, selfish mother, Jessica, Summer's never known her father and spent her childhood bouncing "from home to home, school to school, and stepfather to stepfather." All that time, Jessica's kept a massive secret: she knows exactly who Summer's father is, and where Summer can find him. When the truth finally comes out, Summer goes looking for him—and finds a whole new family. It's a whirlwind of revelations, love, and long-simmering resentment. Amid all the chaos, Summer finds refuge in her budding connection with Cody, her father's business partner whom he's always treated like a son. Their chemistry is instant and intense—and together they navigate the murky waters of family secrets, past hurts, forgiveness, and new beginnings. The romance is endearing, but it's the complex and affecting family drama that will really hook readers. Colleen Hoover fans should check this out. *Agent: Suzie Townsend, New Leaf Literary. (June)*

Inspirational

This Is Where It Ends

Cindy K. Sproles. Revell, $16.99 trade paper (288p) ISBN 978-0-800-74079-5

A widow contends with the aftershocks of a buried secret from her late husband's past in this bittersweet reflection on regret and God's grace from Sproles (*What Momma Left Behind*). Minerva Jenkins is in her 60s when her husband Stately dies of a heart attack on their remote Kentucky farm in 1872. His last words to her aren't a declaration of love but a desperate demand that Minerva continue to keep his "secret," in the form of a box containing what she believes is stolen gold. Thirty years later, 94-year-old Minerva has faithfully protected it but as a result led an overwhelmingly reclusive life, and as her health fails, she fears she's going to die alone. Then reporter Delano Rankin turns up at her cabin with questions about Stately and his possible links to the long-gone gold for a story he's researching. His kindness leads Minerva to reflect on her faith and whether her marriage to Stately was truly a happy one, and she contemplates telling him about the box, but mysterious break-ins to her home suggest someone else may be hunting for the rumored riches. Feisty Minerva is an endearing narrator, though the plot tends to drag and the details of Stately's secret are excessively teased. It should do the trick for the author's fans, but newcomers will have a hard time staying involved. *(June)*



Rescue in the Wilderness

Andrea Byrd. Wild Heart, $2.99 e-book (196p) ASIN B0BWK9XJXK

Byrd (*Smoky Mountain Temper*) sets up a slow-burning romance between two wounded souls in this atmospheric late 18th-century series opener. After his sister's death from smallpox, heartbroken William Cole fled Boston to live a hermetic life in Virginia. One night at a tavern, William overhears a boorish man seeking to wed his daughter, Lucinda, to the winner of a card game. Determined to save her, William finds her before she can be married off and convinces her to escape with him to Kentucky. Lucinda sees William's offer as an opportunity from God to abandon a miserable life, but also fears she's unlovable due to her unsightly scars from years of her father's abuse. William bears his own emotional wounds—he blames himself for his sister's death—and is drawn to Lucinda because of her beauty and steadfast faith in God. William guides Lucinda and a group of travelers on a perilous trek through the Appalachian Mountains, during which they encounter harsh terrain and an iced-over river crossing. Just as things heat up between Lucinda and William, an attack from a band of Native Americans leaves William's life in the balance. While the characters feel a bit flat, the fast-paced narrative and fine-grained setting bring this tale of romantic adventure to life. It's perfect for readers seeking a high-energy, faith-filled escape. *(June)*

Comics

Listen, Beautiful Márcia

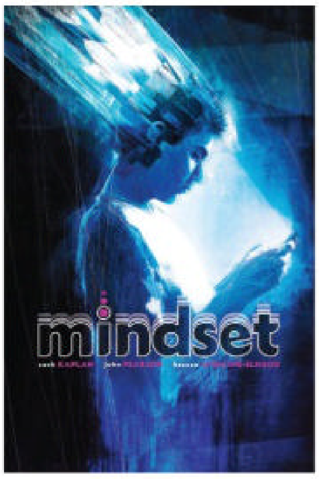
Marcello Quintanilha, trans. from the Portuguese by Andrea Rosenberg. Fantagraphics, $29.99 (128p) ISBN 978-1-68396-777-4

Cinematic and saturated with color, Quintanilha's English-language debut, a character study of a mother trying to keep her family safe in a Brazilian favela, vibrates with emotion. Nursing assistant Márcia's wild daughter Jaqueline calls her "bro" and "girl" and accuses Márcia's partner Aluísio of giving her gonorrhea (though it seems Jaqueline's married gangster boyfriend, Tigela, might be a more likely candidate). Márcia stands up to Tigela and his paramilitary associates, lovingly cares for an elderly woman with Alzheimer's, and—after Jaqueline is arrested for selling stolen goods—collaborates with law enforcement to bring Tigela to justice. Yet Márcia's street-smart exterior belies a tender soul. She allows herself a few wistful moments listening to opera; late at night, she asks Aluísio if she's beautiful. She laments "I've ruined everything I've touched" and tries to push Aluísio away after the gang beats him up. Her pain is visible in Quintanilha's close-ups, lines rippling across her lavender-hued face. The messy pop art renders characters with skin colored like Easter eggs, against a bright backdrop of bustling favela life. The scenes throb with violence and heartache, but those closest to Márcia ultimately see her kindness, which also permeates every page. It's a gorgeous tumult. *(May)*

Mindset: The Complete Series

Zack Kaplan and John J. Pearson. Vault, $19.99 trade paper (184p) ISBN 978-1-63849-159-0

This twisty and cynical thriller cleverly situates itself at the intersection of heated debates about social media, tech giants, and social inequality. Kaplan (the Break Out series) scripts a fast-moving vehicle constructed of Silicon Valley critique, business-world skullduggery, and tortured ethical debates, with jaggedly colorful art by Eisner-winner Pearson (*Blue in Green*). After opening with a dramatic flash-forward in which the narrator, Ben, explains away a murder charge by claiming "it wasn't my choice.... It's all mind control," the story winds back to when Ben was just another Stanford grad trying to make it big in tech. A frustrated idealist, he wants to create an app that protects users from being influenced by social media. Ironically, his breakthrough discovery—an electromagnetic signal that can control people's minds—turns out to be more insidious than the system he's trying to subvert. Disguised as a meditation app, Mindset's an instant hit, and its users are unaware Ben and his three brogrammer co-inventors have been granted Jedi powers over their psyches. The app's world-changing potential, and the billions of dollars at stake, lead to schemes, counter-plots, and murder. The climax loses itself in a fog of poorly explicated reversals, but maintains the propulsive paranoia. Fans of *The Social Network* and tales of corporate espionage will snap this up. *(Apr.)*



Boy's Abyss

Ryo Minenami, trans. from the Japanese by John Werry. Viz, $12.99 trade paper (208p) ISBN 978-1-974736-68-3

Minenami (*Hatsukoi Zombie*) lends an elegant drawing style to soap opera–level last-chance love drama in this manga. Reiji feels like he has nothing to live for: he's trapped in a backwater town, forced by his stressed-out mother to take care of his sick grandma and shut-in older brother. His luck seems to turn, though, when he meets Nagi Aoe, the leader of rising pop group Acrylic, who is, oddly, working at a convenience store. When he unloads his woes on her, Nagi abruptly and flirtatiously proposes a suicide pact as "a cool way to go." First, though, she suggests, "Wanna come over to my place?" Their intense, mortality-inflected sexual tension (and explicit sex scenes) are shot through with angsty dialogue—and then Nagi's husband appears. The drama keeps pages turning, though Reiji's passivity and overwhelming life circumstances can feel almost too perfectly miserable. Nagi's allure comes across in Minenami's delicate rendering—with Reiji's best friend Chako a cute, spunky foil (and better-realized character). This meet-cute gets darkly erotic about the will to live—and love. This one's for adult readers, but those who were formerly moony teens will swoon. *(Apr.)*

W.E.B. Du Bois Souls of Black Folk: A Graphic Interpretation

W.E.B. Du Bois and Paul Peart-Smith, edited by Paul Buhle and Herb Boyd. Rutgers Univ., $19.95 trade paper (180p) ISBN 978-1-978824-65-2

"Hear my cry, O God the reader; vouchsafe that this my book fall not stillborn into the world wilderness," cries visionary scholar Du Bois (1868–1963) in lament. Cartoonist Peart-Smith (*Horrible Histories*) answers with an uneven nine-chapter graphic adaptation of Du Bois's influential literary text. In "Of Our Spiritual Strivings," undefined faces haunt Du Bois's recollection of his boyhood and the "problem of the color line." In "Of the Meaning of Progress," sepia-lacquered scenes of barefoot schoolchildren and farm labor underscore the tension between opportunity and strife for post-Reconstruction-era Black Americans. The lithograph-like drawings, awash in earth tones, while reflective of painful circumstances, also suffer from muddied details and literal thematic translations that inconsistently elevate the original text. "Of the Coming of John" benefits most from the vivid retelling of John Jones, a young Black boy who leaves southeastern Georgia for a better education up north and returns an embittered man. The art amplifies the horror of John's tragic life—wide eyes and gritted teeth denote terror and pain. More detailed linework is employed for historical figures, such as Booker T. Washington. With varying degrees of success, this adaptation enlivens while condensing an important historical work, which, while not quite expanding on the original, will make its dense arguments accessible for a new generations. *(Apr.)*

Nonfiction

Dream Town: Shaker Heights and the Quest for Racial Equity

Laura Meckler. Holt, $29.99 (400p)
ISBN 978-1-250-83441-6

Journalist Meckler debuts with an in-depth analysis of desegregation efforts in her hometown of Shaker Heights, Ohio. Developed in the early 20th century as an affluent, white suburb of Cleveland, Shaker Heights remained that way for decades because real estate agents refused to show homes to Black home buyers, neighbors declined to give required approvals to nonwhite potential neighbors, and banks denied loans to mortgage applicants deemed "undesirable." Over time, various organizations attempted to integrate Shaker Heights, but it wasn't until the civil rights movement of the 1960s that those efforts met with any measure of success. Meckler details how Ludlow, one of the first neighborhoods to integrate, sought to counteract white flight by recruiting white home buyers and promoting the benefits of a "racially diverse community," and delves deep into the persistence of the racial achievement gap in Shaker Heights's public schools. The case study of a well-regarded white teacher who was placed on administrative leave after being accused of "humiliat[ing] and embarrass[ing]" a Black student in her AP English class sheds light on the racial tensions at play. Throughout, Meckler draws on extensive interviews with parents, teachers, community leaders, and students to present the various controversies from multiple perspectives, resulting in a nuanced and impressively detailed study of the barriers to racial equality. Policymakers and social justice activists should take note. *(Aug.)*

A 1914 photo of Thomas Edison, naturalist John Burroughs, and Henry Ford at Edison's Florida estate, as seen in Wes Davis's American Journey *(reviewed on p. 54).*

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Gallop Toward the Sun: Tecumseh and Harrison's Struggle for the Destiny of a Nation

Peter Stark. Random House, $28.99 (416p)
ISBN 978-0-593-13361-3

In this intriguing study, historian Stark (*Young Washington*) examines the conflict between two major figures of the America's "western destiny," William Henry Harrison and Shawnee chief Tecumseh. Focusing on the decades leading up to the War of 1812, Stark reveals how the actions of both men—often in direct response to the other—affected the development of "the continent's center—spanning from Lake Superior in the North to the Gulf of Mexico in the South, and from the Appalachians in the East to the Rockies in the West," and the decimation of the region's Native American communities. As Indiana's territorial governor, Harrison enforced dubious claims in the "relentless" pursuit of new lands for settlement, while Tecumseh sought to unite America's Indigenous tribes in a confederacy of resistance. A brilliant orator, Tecumseh fiercely condemned the deceitful behavior of the U.S. government, comparing the "forced exodus" of Native Americans to "a galloping horse... being driven westward toward the setting sun." Eventually, Tecumseh and his forces allied with the British during the War of 1812, where he cemented his fame as a military leader before he was killed in the Battle of the Thames. Vivid biographical detail and astute analysis of how Harrison and Tecumseh's competing visions for the future fueled the conflict make this is an informative chapter in the history of the American frontier. *(Aug.)*

Revolutionary Feminists: The Women's Liberation Movement in Seattle

Barbara Winslow. Duke Univ., $26.95 trade paper (248p) ISBN 978-1-4780-1991-6

Winslow (*Shirley Chisholm*), a professor emerita of women's and gender studies at Brooklyn College, delivers a granular history of the radical women's liberation movement in Seattle from 1965 to 1975. Forcefully pushing back against criticism that the organizations behind the movement, including her own Radical Women, advanced a white, middle-class agenda and ignored the needs of women of color, Winslow highlights their anti-imperialist and anti-capitalist perspectives and focus on issues of childcare, and notes the involvement of Black feminist luminaries including Nina Harding. Though many feminist victories are recounted, particularly the 1970 public referendum that liberalized the state's abortion laws, Winslow also details how the movement was impeded by differences of opinion about strategy and the influence of male-led socialist and progressive organizations. Ultimately, the radical women's groups in Seattle were subsumed by regional branches of more mainstream national feminist organizations. Winslow crams an impressive amount of play-by-play detail into her account, but the book's takeaways are partially obscured by its tone of defensiveness. The result is a worthwhile but somewhat tedious snapshot of radical feminism. *(Aug.)*

The Heat Will Kill You First: Life and Death on a Scorched Planet

Jeff Goodell. Little, Brown, $29 (400p)
ISBN 978-0-316-49757-2

Heatstroke, infectious disease, and attacks by starving polar bears are among the perils posed by rising temperatures, according to this startling report. *Rolling Stone* contributing editor Goodell (*The Water Will Come*) surveys how extreme heat is ravaging the planet, describing the 2021 wildfire that tore through the town of Lytton in British Columbia during an unprecedented 121 °F heat wave, the sudden deaths by overheating of a California family out for a hike in the state's Sierra Nevada foothills, and the spread of disease-carrying mosquitoes into warming regions. The author also details how his own life has been affected by climate change, as when he recounts a trip he took with friends to the Canadian Arctic, where they were shadowed by polar bears that were likely hungry and eyeing the group's food because the lack of ice floes made it difficult to hunt seals. The alarming case studies are well complemented by elegant reportage on overheated regions ("The air feels solid, a hazy, ozone-soaked curtain of heat," he writes of a summer day in Phoenix) and disturbing explanations of the dire physical effects of excessive heat (a 107 °F body temperature melts cell membranes). It's a sobering assessment of the risks of global warming. *(July)*

Righting the American Dream: How the Media Mainstreamed Reagan's Evangelical Vision

Diane H. Winston. Univ. of Chicago, $35 (256p) ISBN 978-0-226-82452-9

USC journalism professor Winston (*Religion in Los Angeles*) argues in this illuminating history that Ronald Reagan's ability to "set and dominate news media narratives" led to broad shifts in the country's "religious, economic, and political beliefs." Spotlighting Reagan's remarkable turnaround in 1983, when he went from a 35% approval rating to establishing himself as America's "white knight" and winning a landslide reelection in 1984, Winston asserts that Reagan's practice of injecting "a religious or moral dimension" into his comments enabled him to impose his conservative Christian values on the country, unmake the New Deal consensus, entrench a Darwinian vision of capitalism, and enact a foreign policy "dominated by his loathing of communism and the Soviet Union." Winston sheds valuable light on how American reporters covered the invasion of Grenada and the AIDS crisis, and on the rise of the evangelical movement in the U.S. and its entwinement with conservative politics, and she incisively analyzes the subtleties of Reagan's messaging, noting, for example, that "Morning in America," a key advertisement from his reelection campaign, utilized a church wedding scene to emphasize how religion and

[Q&A]

PW TALKS WITH KRISTA BURTON

Drag Shows and Dildo Races

In *Moby Dyke* (Simon & Schuster, June; reviewed on p. 56), Burton tours America's lesbian bars, from Washington, D.C.'s A League of Her Own to San Francisco's Wild West Side

© TAWNYA SWEETPEA KONOBECK

Why are lesbian bars so important for the queer community?

Lesbian bars provided a space for me when I was just coming out as a lesbian. They provided—and still provide!—a space where I could feel affirmed in that identity, welcomed, and able to be myself. Just to be surrounded by people who may not identify exactly as you do but openly feel that however you identify yourself is completely valid, is monumental. Especially when you're young, a little bit unsure of yourself, and don't have your footing just yet.

When you started your tour in 2021, there were only 20 lesbian bars in the U.S., down from 206 in 1987. What's the reason for the decline?

There were so many more reasons than I was expecting! I thought I would finish this book with two to four, but in the end, I came away with more than 10 good reasons. One that I'd never thought about is a lack of succession plans. The owner dies suddenly, and they've never once thought about who's going to run it. Another reason I hadn't considered was that sometimes lesbian bars are run by a couple. If they break up, whose bar is it? Other reasons include women and queer people not making as much money as cis men, gentrification, and queer people using apps as a way to meet.

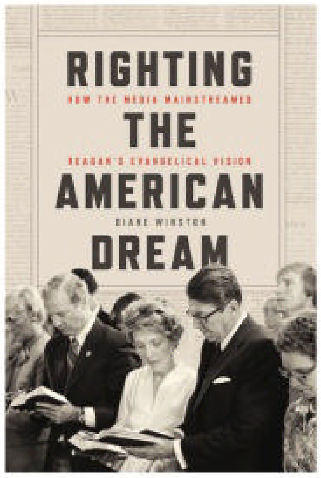
How have the remaining bars stayed in business?

Because they're fighting to stay open every day! These are loved and needed spaces, and they're doing what they can. I've been noticing bars with engaging, updated Instagram accounts, which I feel like you didn't use to see. Some have events happening literally every night—karaoke, drag, bingo, trivia, dance nights with campy themes. Without social media, how would anyone know how much fun everyone's having inside? Those events are aimed at getting people in the door, but they're also helping people to feel like they have a community space. A lot of what the bars are doing—sponsoring sports teams, volunteering locally—are things that lesbian bars have historically always done. But now they're using social media to encourage people to visit and feel like they have a queer home and community.

Are you optimistic about the state of lesbian bars?

I feel extremely optimistic. Lesbian bars are suddenly opening again! When I started writing the book, Chicago had zero. Now, they have three. People are starting to feel the loss of these spaces in a way that makes them want to do something about it, and that translates into new spaces opening up. I feel fantastic about how this is going. Hopefully, there will eventually be lesbian and queer bars within a reasonable distance of every person who wants to go!

—CAMPBELL CAMPBELL



morality were essential to his vision of a "new patriotism." Unfortunately, Winston paints the American press with a broad brush and somewhat underplays how a rebounding economy and other real-world circumstances helped Reagan's message resonate with a broad swath of voters. Still, this is a valuable analysis of the intertwining of faith and politics in America. Photos. *(July)*

Excluded: How Snob Zoning, NIMBYism, and Class Bias Build the Walls We Don't See

Richard D. Kahlenberg. PublicAffairs, $30 (352p) ISBN 978-1-5417-0146-5

Kahlenberg (coauthor of *A Smarter Charter*), a researcher on education and housing policy, argues in this comprehensive study that "state-sponsored economic discrimination" has replaced racial discrimination as the main contributor to residential segregation in America. According to Kahlenberg, when affluent, often liberal communities prohibit accessory dwelling units, impose density restrictions, require housing to be built on large lots, set onerous parking requirements, and impose other "exclusionary zoning" regulations, they help maintain racial segregation and prevent lower-income families from moving into neighborhoods with good schools and into cities with employment opportunities. To remedy the problem, Kahlenberg advocates for the Economic Fair Housing Act, which would make it "illegal for government zoning to discriminate on the basis of income"; calls on the federal government to commit more money to subsidizing the construction of affordable housing; and draws hope from successful efforts in California, Oregon, and Charlotte, N.C., to replace single-family zoning with zoning that allows for multi-family housing units. Kahlenberg persuasively addresses concerns from both the right and the left, and stuffs the book with an abundance of research. It's a worthy guide to fixing one of America's most enduring social ills. *Agent: Lisa Adams, Garamond. (July)*

Graveyard of the Pacific: Shipwreck and Survival on America's Deadliest Waterway

Randall Sullivan. Atlantic Monthly, $30 (272p) ISBN 978-0-8021-6240-3

More than 2,000 shipwrecks have been caused by the "collision of tide and current" that occurs where the Columbia River, which forms much of the border between Washington and Oregon, empties into the Pacific Ocean, according to this immersive mix of history and travelogue. Journalist Sullivan (*Untouchable*) centers the narrative on his attempt to cross the Columbia River Bar, the area where ships make the dangerous transition between river and ocean, in a kayak. Interwoven with the weather analysis, safety training, and strategic mapping Sullivan and his friend Ray did in the months before they turned 70 to prepare for the journey are insights into how Clatsop tribespeople made the passage in "immense, sixty-five-foot-long canoes that could carry more than fifty paddlers" and accounts of the many ships and sailors lost to the waterway's unpredictable tides, towering waves, and hidden sandbars. Even modern freighters rely on specially trained bar pilots" to guide them through the area, Sullivan notes. Driven by "a wish for some unpronounceable rite of passage that could only happen in the late stage of life," Sullivan and Ray, both survivors of childhood abuse, viewed their mission "as a salvage operation, one involving the recovery of something lost in childhood and reconciliation with the ghosts of our fathers." Vividly evoking Sullivan's deep fascination with the Pacific Northwest and thirst for friendship and adventure, this is a thrill ride. *(June)*

The Wrath to Come: 'Gone with the Wind' and the Lies America Tells

Sarah Churchwell. Head of Zeus, $40 (464p) ISBN 978-1-78954-298-1

Churchwell (*Behold, America*), a professor of American literature at the University of London, delivers an impassioned critique of Margaret Mitchell's 1936 novel *Gone with the Wind* and its influence on today's political polarization. Writing at the height of the "lost cause" movement, Mitchell highlighted the modernity of her protagonist, Scarlett O'Hara, but refused to allow Scarlett—or any other character—to feel empathy for the book's enslaved Black characters. In so doing, Churchwell argues, Mitchell reinforced the idea that emancipation was a direct assault on the "political and economic agency" of Southern white women at a time when the rules of Victorian coverture prevented married women from owning property. Churchwell smoothly integrates her analysis of key scenes in the novel and its film adaptation with accounts of lynch mob violence, the rise of the Ku Klux Klan, and the installation of Confederate monuments across the South, and draws persuasive links between *Gone with the Wind*'s romanticization of a racially and socially stratified society and the grievances that motivated protesters during the January 6 Capitol riot. Valuable light is also shed on Mitchell's anti-war beliefs and her firm conviction that she was not a racist, but simply telling the truth about the antebellum South and the cruelties of Reconstruction. The result is a nuanced and convincing takedown of an American classic. Photos. *(June)*

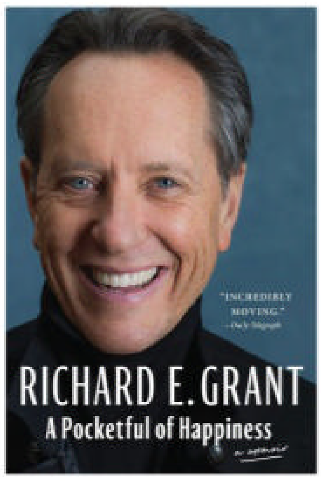
American Journey: On the Road with Henry Ford, Thomas Edison, and John Burroughs

Wes Davis. Norton, $30 (368p) ISBN 978-1-324-00032-7

In this rambling history, journalist Davis (*The Ariadne Objective*) views the push-pull between America's "modern bustle" and "dream of agrarian stability" through the unique lens of a series of road trips undertaken in the early 20th century. The centerpiece of the narrative is a 1918 automobile expedition through southern Appalachia led by car manufacturer Henry Ford, naturalist John Burroughs, and inventor Thomas Edison, but Davis also recounts separate excursions made by these friends and others to visit Ralph Waldo Emerson's home in Massachusetts, the 1915 Panama-Pacific International Exposition in San Francisco, and the Green Mountains of Vermont. The unlikely friendship between Burroughs and Ford developed after the former wrote an article complaining that the automobile “could only have a negative impact on the natural world and America’s appreciation of its riches and wonders.” He became a quick convert to the new technology, however, after receiving a Model T as a gift from Ford and realizing that cars had the potential “to make more of the natural world accessible to more people.” Davis conveys the excitement and danger of early automobile travel and crafts memorable set pieces, including a rain-soaked camping adventure reminiscent of a Buster Keaton comedy, but his digressions sometimes stall the narrative’s forward momentum. Still, this historical road trip is well worth taking. Photos. *(June)*

★ A Pocketful of Happiness

Richard E. Grant. Simon & Schuster, $28.99 (352p) ISBN 978-1-66803-069-1



Actor Grant (*With Nails*) delivers an excellent memoir that’s part journal, part love letter to his late wife, Joan Washington. Mostly, he chronicles his and Joan’s ups and downs across 38 years, from their meeting in 1982, when he hired her as a dialect coach to “iron out” his Swazi accent, to her cancer diagnosis, decline, and eventual death. He also peppers in witty gossip, including the time he met “his lifelong idol” Barbara Streisand, descriptions of his friendship with Melissa McCarthy (“Melissa is, in fact, morose, always late for work, never knows her lines, is inconsiderate, selfish, and we did not get along, *at all,”* he tells an audience, to “big laughs and an even bigger hug from her”), and a particularly endearing account of the time he accepted a role as the Spice Girls’ manager in *Spice World* to please his eight-year-old daughter. Though he doesn’t sugarcoat the challenges of caring for Joan during her illness or his grief after she died (“I feel and look like an old turtle without my shell, trying to navigate the world on my own, having lost my loving compass”), Grant’s tender recollections effectively conjure on the page the couple’s enduring connection. The result is a moving and entertaining celebration of life and love. *(July)*

Cage Kings: How an Unlikely Group of Moguls, Champions, and Hustlers Transformed the UFC into a $10 Billion Industry

Michael Thomsen. Simon & Schuster, $29.99 (464p) ISBN 978-1-5011-9847-2

This strong debut by journalist Thomsen charts the tumultuous rise of the Ultimate Fighting Championship, the professional mixed martial arts league. Drawing on interviews with fighters, trainers, promoters, and media executives, Thomsen chronicles how the UFC started as an inauspicious moonshot, overcame bans in 36 states, and became “one of the most valuable sports franchises in the world.” The Championship, Thomsen writes, was the brainchild of ad executive Art Davie, who in the early 1990s developed a pitch for a TV series featuring combat between fighters of different disciplines (“Could an American kickboxer fend off a sumo wrestler?”), and with support from Brazilian jiu-jitsu champion Rorion Gracie, the UFC debuted on pay-per-view television in 1993. Thomsen breaks down the business deals, controversies, and fights that took the UFC from niche sport to corporate behemoth, including John McCain’s 1996 crusade to ban the league from television and blow-by-blow accounts of key matches. Deep dives into the lives of Davie, fighter Conor McGregor, and UFC president Dana White give the narrative a novelistic quality, and Thomsen thoughtfully probes the ethical questions raised by the sport, criticizing it for permitting submission holds that “tear ligaments and muscle from the bone.” This is the definitive account of the UFC’s fight to the top. *(June)*

The Case for Good Jobs: How Great Companies Bring Dignity, Pay, and Meaning to Everyone’s Work

Zeynep Ton. Harvard Business Review, $32 (256p) ISBN 978-1-64782-417-4

Investing in workers is good for them and for business, according to this impassioned outing by Ton (*The Good Jobs Strategy*), a professor at the MIT Sloan School of Management. She contends that prioritizing customer-facing workers boosts profits because it reduces turnover while increasing productivity and customer satisfaction. To that end, she outlines the five tenets of her “good jobs system”: invest in workers (generous hourly rates and consistent schedules), simplify workflow, give employees a voice in how to best serve customers, train employees to perform “both customer-facing and non–customer-facing tasks” (ensuring they can be productive during periods of low traffic), and staff “more hours of labor than the expected workload so that employees can do their jobs without rushing.” Examining companies that have followed this advice, she notes that Costco’s $25 median hourly wage for salespeople boosted employee retention and helped the company increase its annual revenue. Ton also details her work improving employee productivity at Quest Diagnostics’ call center by embracing feedback from reps on how to improve workflow. Persuasively argued and bolstered by astute case studies, this will be a boon to business leaders. *(June)*

How to Work with (Almost) Anyone: Five Questions for Building the Best Possible Relationships

Michael Bungay Stanier. Page Two, $17.95 trade paper (224p) ISBN 978-1-77458-265-7

In this slight program, business consultant Stanier (*How to Begin*) opines on how to build strong professional relationships with coworkers, bosses, direct reports, or clients. His approach rests on having one-on-one “keystone conversations” in which individuals discuss five questions regarding their strengths and work habits, what they’ve learned from previous professional relationships, and how to repair their relationship if it turns sour. The details of how to have this conversation are questionable. The scripts Stanier provides are awkwardly worded (he encourages readers to discuss an interlocutor's talents by asking, "What's your best?"), and while the in-depth talks he advocates for might be appropriate for a supervisor and direct report, their utility in a provider/client relationship is dubious. Additionally, the numerous personal anecdotes about Stanier riding the bus with his wife and playing Dungeons and Dragons as a teenager do little to shine light on how the advice plays out in the workplace. There are a few useful nuggets peppered throughout, including the suggestion that readers "let go of 'being right' " when clearing the air in a difficult relationship and restating at the end of a conversation what one learned, which he suggests helps one remember the information. However, these tidbits don't make up for the overall lackluster guidance. This misses the mark. *(June)*

Moby Dyke: An Obsessive Quest to Track Down the Last Remaining Lesbian Bars in America

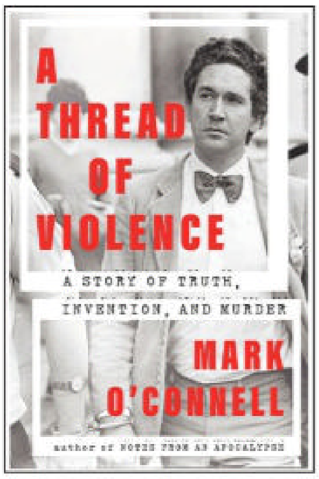
Krista Burton. Simon & Schuster, $28.99 (320p) ISBN 978-1-66800-053-3

Effing Dykes blogger Burton debuts with a witty cross-country tour of lesbian bars. Eager to reconnect with the queer community after Covid-19 lockdowns, Burton set out in 2021 on a pilgrimage with her trans husband, Davin, to visit the 20 self-identifying lesbian bars (down from 206 in 1987) left in the U.S. (more have since opened). Highlights include Burton's first visit to a drag show since the onset of the pandemic, at the Back Door in Bloomington, Ind.; singing the queer anthem "Goodbye Earl" with dozens of other patrons at the Lipstick Lounge in Nashville; and competing in dildo races at the Pearl Bar in Houston. Along the way, Burton makes friends, studies lesbian behavior ("My god do we love a spot where we can lean while we stare at each other without engaging"), and discusses reasons for the closure of "dyke bars," including gentrification, the pandemic, and the growing acceptance of the queer community in mainstream culture. In response, the remaining nightspots have become more inclusive of other segments of the LGBTQ community and added indoor slides, Instagram-friendly patios, and other attractions. Throughout, Burton's keen observations and sense of humor are on full display. It adds up to an infectious celebration of the joy and resilience of queer spaces. *(June)*

★ A Thread of Violence: A Story of Truth, Invention, and Murder

Mark O'Connell. Doubleday, $29 (304p) ISBN 978-0-385-54762-8

In this true crime gem, journalist O'Connell (*Notes from an Apocalypse*) recounts a year he spent interviewing one of Ireland's most notorious killers. Socialite Malcolm Macarthur came from landed gentry: confidants described him as unfailingly polite and fond of silk bow ties. But in 1982, with his inheritance dwindling, he planned to rob a bank and murdered two people in pursuit of a car and a gun for the task. After pleading guilty, making headlines, and serving almost 30 years in prison, Macarthur was released and went on to a quiet life in Dublin. O'Connell manages a fascinating portrait of his deliberately elusive subject: "There were places he would much rather have been, but he had done what he had done," he writes of Macarthur's attitude toward his time in prison. "The murder had, in a sense, originated in his refusal to relinquish a life of leisurely learning and reading;... in incarceration, he had found something strangely like this freedom." Swirling together dogged reporting with questions about the media's coverage of crime, O'Connell manages a gripping account that casts a skeptical eye on its own genre. Even readers usually put off by profiles of killers will be piqued. *Agent: Amelia Atlas, ICM Partners. (June)*


A THREAD OF VIOLENCE
A STORY OF TRUTH, INVENTION, AND MURDER
MARK O'CONNELL
author of NOTES FROM AN APOCALYPSE

Winner Sells All: Amazon, Walmart, and the Battle for Our Wallets

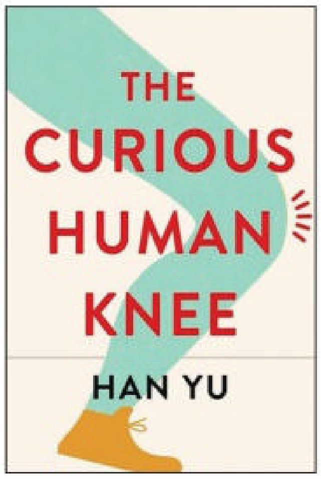
Jason Del Rey. Harper Business, $32 (288p) ISBN 978-0-06-307632-7

Journalist Del Rey debuts with an impressive account of the rivalry between Amazon and Walmart, digging into the decisions that enabled Amazon to give the "big bad bully of retail" a run for its money. Drawing on interviews "with current and former executives, employees, and industry insiders," Del Rey chronicles how Amazon's tech savvy and rapid growth led it to become "Walmart 2.0, for better and worse." Amazon, he notes, started as an online book retailer in 1995 and began selling other products in 1998, after it poached top executives from Walmart. Del Rey describes Walmart as slow to respond and stuck in the past, with CEO David Glass predicting in the late '90s that "Walmart's online store would never register more sales than the largest single Sam's Club brick-and-mortar location." The author illuminates the legal loopholes that gave Amazon an early advantage (it didn't have to pay sales tax in states where the company had no physical presence), as well as how the bickering between Walmart's store and e-commerce executives hampered the retailer's growth in the online market. Del Rey's behind-the-scenes insights enlighten, and the author makes no bones about what the companies' success has cost workers, criticizing both for keeping wages low while lavishly rewarding executives. This thorough outing delivers. *(June)*

The Curious Human Knee

Han Yu. Columbia Univ., $29.95 (296p) ISBN 978-0-231-20702-7

In this enlightening blend of science and cultural history, Yu (*Mind Thief*), an English professor at Kansas State University, considers the evolution and physiology of the human knee, as well as its role in fashion and customs. Expounding on how human knees differ from those of other great apes, she explains that human thigh bones meet shinbones at an angle that allows for greater balance while standing on two feet, an adaptation that enabled bipedalism but also put the joints at increased risk of injury from the greater weight



placed on them. Yu studies clothing trends centered on knees, covering how 1920s flapper dresses with above-the-knee hemlines led to a moral panic and how 1970s punks used jeans ripped at the knee to indicate “their contempt for consumerism, wealth, and social status.” Other chapters meditate on the history of kneeling in front of royalty, why women athletes suffer more knee injuries than men, and the author’s recovery after tearing her meniscus, highlighting the overlooked role the knee plays in human evolutionary history and culture. Yu excels at identifying colorful material on an ostensibly mundane subject, and lay readers will appreciate the accessible prose. This makes for an animated and wide-ranging exploration of an unassuming body part. *(June)*

Chaos Kings: How Wall Street Traders Make Billions in the New Age of Crisis

Scott Patterson. Scribner, $30 (288p) ISBN 978-1-982179-93-9

Wall Street Journal reporter Patterson (*Dark Pools*) delivers an enlightening investigation into those who profit from anticipating crises. Patterson outlines the two prevailing camps of catastrophe forecasters: there are those who follow trader Nassim Nicholas Taleb’s “Black Swan” theory, which posits that world-changing events are often entirely unpredictable, and then there are those who follow French physicist Didier Sornette’s “Dragon King” theory, which holds that events can be predicted if one has the right inputs. The author explains how Taleb positions himself to profit from sudden market crashes by purchasing put options (an agreement that obligates the option seller to buy back assets at a predetermined price should the option buyer decide to sell), which usually result in minor losses but have huge payoffs during market plunges. Sharp profiles of Taleb, Sornette, and other traders leaven the complicated financial discussions; for example, Patterson describes Sornette as a strong-willed risk taker whose idiosyncratic thinking led him to predict the housing bubble of the mid-aughts. Additionally, the author has a knack for translating complicated financial maneuvers into easily comprehensible terms (he likens put options to “fire insurance that pays off triple the value of your mortgage… if your home burns”). Detailed yet accessible, this will appeal to fans of Michael Lewis’s *The Big Short*. *(June)*

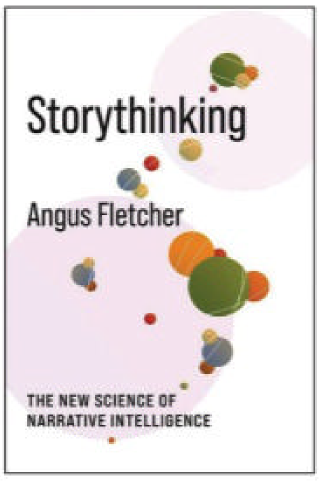
Legacies of the Stone Guest: The Don Juan Legend in Russian Literature

Alexander Burry. Univ. of Wisconsin, $99.95 (248p) ISBN 978-0-299-34210-4

The legend of Don Juan has had a profound impact on Russian literature, according to this rigorous study. Burry (*Multi-mediated Dostoevsky*), a Slavic and East European languages professor at Ohio State University, traces how Alexander Pushkin’s 1839 play *The Stone Guest*—in which Don Juan seduces the widow of the Commander Don Juan had killed in a duel, only for a statue of the Commander to come to life and seek revenge—echoes throughout the Russian canon. Comparing Pushkin’s love triangle to the one in *Anna Karenina*, Burry contends that Tolstoy’s novel draws parallels between Anna and Don Juan to express skepticism toward women’s liberation and suggest that women who embrace Don Juan’s “rebellious libertinism” find only “boredom, frustration, and eventually, suicide.” Burry argues that Pushkin “Russianized” the Don Juan legend by dramatizing through the protagonist and the Commander the tension between a “free, iconoclastic individual” and a “restrictive, conformist society,” and he posits that such late-Soviet authors as Venedikt Erofeev and Vladimir Kazakov evoked Pushkin’s Don Juan to push back against their era’s “political, social, and sexual repression.” The methodical literary analysis illuminates an overlooked strand in the fiction of the Russian greats, though the prose is a bit dry. Still, this should pique the interest of Russian literature specialists. *(June)*

Storythinking: The New Science of Narrative Intelligence

Angus Fletcher. Columbia Univ., $25 trade paper (192p) ISBN 978-0-231-20693-8



Fletcher (*Wonderworks*), an English professor at Ohio State University, makes a stimulating if uneven case for the importance of what he calls “storythinking,” a mode of cognition through which humans conceive of new possibilities and envision cause and effect relationships. Contrasting storythinking with logic, he explains somewhat opaquely that the latter works by “correlational reasoning” (“this equals that”) and the former by “causal speculation” (“this causes that”). He laments that philosophy has long valued logic over such alternative forms of knowing as stories, telling how Plato denigrated narrative as mere “imitation” and early 20th-century Cambridge literature professor I.A. Richards applied semiotics to fiction, hoping to make literary analysis as rigorous as the hard sciences. One of narrative’s primary virtues, Fletcher suggests, is that it doesn’t need to proceed from data and can instead imagine wholly new worlds, though he acknowledges stories also have downsides, including the ability to distort reality through “elision, bias, and outright fabrication.” Examining the benefits of narrative intrigues, but the lack of examples illustrating how storythinking works and differs from other forms of cognition will leave readers struggling to follow along. There’s some meaty ideas, but they’re let down by the execution. *(June)*

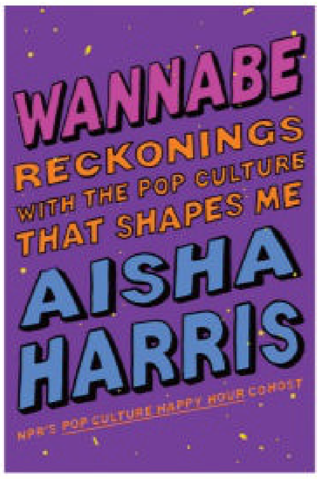
The Universe in a Box: Simulations and the Quest to Code the Cosmos

Andrew Pontzen. Riverhead, $29 (272p) ISBN 978-0-593-33048-7

Cosmologist Pontzen debuts with an exciting if digressive account of how astronomers use computer simulations to study the universe. “We build computer simulations based on the laws of nature—

★ Wannabe: Reckonings with the Pop Culture That Shapes Me

Aisha Harris. HarperOne, $29.99 (320p) ISBN 978-0-06-324994-3

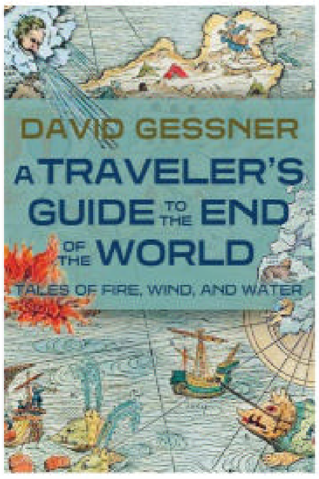


"Pop culture shapes us, and we shape it right back in an invigorating feedback loop of creativity and interpretation," contends Harris, host of NPR's *Pop Culture Happy Hour*, in her refreshing debut, which reflects on the music, movies, and TV shows that have had a formative impact on her life. In "Isn't She Lovely?" Harris recounts how as a teenager she took pains to tell people she was named after a lyric in the Stevie Wonder song and not Another Bad Creation's 1990 hit "Iesha," lamenting that this impulse was driven by internalized anti-Blackness and her desire to distance herself from the "unusual Black" spelling, which she feared would mark her as "ghetto." Harris is an astute observer of the artist/audience relationship, as when she suggests that fans pressure artists to become politically outspoken because fans construct their own identities around their cultural tastes, and so wish for their fandom to express their values. Other pieces explore the racist pushback against casting a Black actor as Ariel in the live-action remake of *The Little Mermaid* and the lack of narrative closure offered by the endless parade of Hollywood reboots, remakes, and prequels, serving up insightful perspectives in animated prose that affirm Harris's status as a first-rate cultural critic. As incisive as they are entertaining, these essays are a treat. *(June)*

gravity, particle physics, light, radiation, and more—in order to obtain predictions that can be tested against the night-sky observations," Pontzen explains, describing how computer simulations tackle such confounding questions as how stars form and how fast the universe is expanding. Tracing the history of scientific simulations, he begins in the 1970s when digital computers became sufficiently powerful to calculate the gravitational pull of dark matter and continues through the '80s and '90s, when simulations showed that neutrinos (subatomic particles believed to make up dark matter) were likely much lighter than initially thought. Pontzen excels at translating quantum physics and other difficult concepts into lay-friendly terms, but reader mileage will vary on the lengthy digressions about Bayesian probability, machine learning, and the relatively obscure "it-from-qubit hypothesis" (a variation on the idea that we all live in a simulation). Still, this look at the cutting edge of astronomy fascinates. *Agent: Chris Wellbelove, Aitken Alexander Assoc. (June)*

A Traveler's Guide to the End of the World: Tales of Fire, Wind, and Water

David Gessner. Torrey House, $21.95 trade paper (320p) ISBN 978-1-948814-81-2



In this sobering wake-up call, Gessner (*Quiet Desperation, Savage Delight*), a creative writing professor at the University of North Carolina Wilmington, recounts his 2021 cross-country travels to locales hit hard by climate change. Surveying the ravages of a warming planet, he tells of visiting 91-year-old environmentalist Ken Sleight at his farm near Pack Creek, Utah, where wildfires destroyed Sleight's home and cleared the way for a devastating flash flood a month later, calamities that sapped Sleight's "spirit to fight on." In Paradise, Calif., Gessner hears from weary residents who were still struggling to rebuild their lives after 2018's Camp Fire even as they were "again under threat of evacuation, this time from the nearby Dixie Fire." Throughout, Gessner waxes poetic on the existential questions posed by climate change, as when he writes of the impossibility of wrapping one's head around the scale of the problem: "We are all small.... For us there is only the trying." The focus on individuals impacted by global warming highlights the despair and other intangible costs of extreme weather, and spirited prose enlivens the proceedings ("The ocean spits forth foam as if rabid, and then builds up with great hump-backed power"). It's a meditative and elegiac look at a country on the brink. *(June)*

Jessica Lange: An Adventurer's Heart

Anthony Uzarowski. Univ. of Kentucky, $34.95 (304p) ISBN 978-0-8131-9725-8

Film historian Uzarowski (*Ava Gardner: A Life in Movies*) takes a revealing look at actor Jessica Lange in this laudatory biography. He begins with her years as "a shy, dreamy girl, often withdrawn and lost in her own world" in Cloquet, Minn., before she left college to study mime in Paris, dabbled in modeling, and began acting in New York. She first appeared on the big screen in the 1976 remake of *King Kong* in a part that was mostly dismissed, except by the *New Yorker*'s Pauline Kael, who compared her to Carole Lombard. Substantial roles followed, including Oscar-winning turns in *Tootsie* and *Blue Sky*, but despite her acclaim, Lange struggled to find worthy roles until she garnered the attention of Ryan Murphy, whose TV series *American Horror Story* reintroduced her to the public in 2021. Uzarowski depicts Lange as a serious, hardworking actor who infused her performances with a unique carnality and yearning, and also touches on her personal relationships, including with dancer Mikhail Baryshnikov and her famously secretive longtime partnership with Sam Shepard. In brisk prose, he paints a thorough, convincing portrait of Lange as a generational talent. Fans will enjoy this loving tribute to a remarkable artist. *(June)*

Through the Groves

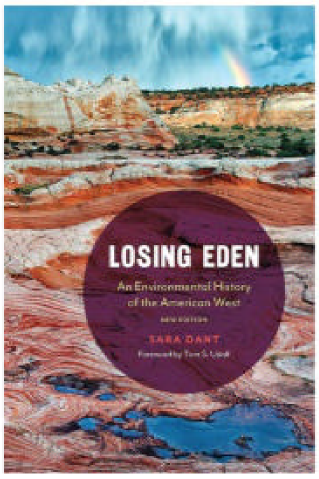
Anne Hull. Holt, $26.99 (224p) ISBN 978-0-80509-337-7

Pulitzer-winning journalist Hull recounts her Florida upbringing in this entrancing coming-out and coming-of-age memoir. She begins in 1967, as her parents' marriage crumbled along with her father's mental health. Soon, Hull's mother moved Hull and her siblings from the sleepy town of Sebring to St. Petersburg, where Hull vividly conjures the "apocalyptic signage" lining State Road 60, a talking mermaid display at "the World's Most Unusual Drug Store," the exotic clutter of her Grandma Damie's house, and the severe nuns at her Catholic school. She paints a masterful, full-fleshed portrait of the Florida of her youth, facing down its racism by detailing the segregated "Black Sebring" neighborhood across the tracks from her childhood home that "felt like a separate town," and unpacking her distaste for the gender expectations foisted upon her by her conservative grandma Gigi and her namesake, Aunt Anne, while Hull was still in the closet. As she recounts coming to understand her sexuality and planning her escape from Florida in the process, Hull dispatches invaluable insights into Deep South culture and Cold War–era gender politics, but they sometimes come at the expense of her personal story. Still, this is a stirring account of growing up at odds with one's environment and making it out on the other side. *(June)*

Losing Eden: An Environmental History of the American West

Sara Dant. Univ. of Nebraska, $29.95 trade paper (368p) ISBN 978-1-4962-2954-0

"Americans have long celebrated progress, material wealth, and technological advancements without considering their true environmental price," according to this edifying environmental history of the Western United States. Dant (*Encyclopedia of American National Parks*), a history professor at Weber State University, suggests that farming, ranching, and urban growth in the West have tested the region's ecological limits, devastated ecosystems, destroyed Native communities, and expended resources at an unsustainable rate. The author provides an overview of how glacial retreat around 15,000 years ago left the area between the Sierra and Rocky Mountains "arid and austere" and how Indigenous populations altered the landscape west of the Great Plains with controlled burns. However, Dant trains most of her attention on the ways in which European colonizers and their descendants have ravaged Western ecosystems, telling how settlers "depleted the region's big game populations" in the 1800s and caused the 1930s Dust Bowl by replacing "deep-rooted prairie bunchgrasses" with wheat and corn. Descriptions of humans' failure to live in harmony with the land resonate with contemporary concerns about global warming, though Dant's prescription for a more sustainable lifestyle (people should live "within, not in spite of, the carrying capacity of the land") is a bit amorphous. Nonetheless, this is a penetrating take on the complicated ways that humans impact their environs. Photos. *(June)*



My Hijacking: A Personal History of Forgetting and Remembering

Martha Hodes. Harper, $32 (384p) ISBN 978-0-06-269979-4

Historian Hodes (*Mourning Lincoln*) mixes memoir, psychology, and investigative reporting in this intimate account of the aftereffects of trauma. In September 1970, 12-year-old Hodes and her older sister, Catherine, were traveling unaccompanied from Tel Aviv to New York City when their plane and two others were hijacked by members of the Popular Front for the Liberation of Palestine and forced to land in the Jordanian desert. Hodes remembers little of the seven-day ordeal ("When I thought about landing in the desert, I saw hazy pictures and heard faint voices," she writes) and eventually discovers that she and other passengers were drugged—the International Red Cross, brought in to help negotiate with the hijackers and care for the hostages, provided tranquilizers to help passengers cope with the stress of captivity. Afterward, Hodes's parents made little effort to further discuss the event, and it would be years before posttraumatic stress disorder became widely understood and therapy was prescribed for victims of terrorism. Hodes also delves into the frenzied reporting on the hijacking, noting that a widely circulated story that one of the hostages gave birth was false. Ultimately, she concludes that by encouraging her and her sister to forget about the hijacking, the adults in their lives contributed to their struggles "as grown-ups to maintain the intimacy that helped us survive back then." It's a poignant and perceptive study of what it takes to heal. Photos. *(June)*

Gays on Broadway

Ethan Mordden. Oxford Univ., $29.95 (232p) ISBN 978-0-19-006310-8

Theater critic Mordden (*Pick a Pocket or Two*) gallops through a century of gay American theater in this uneven history. Surveying 1910 to 2010, Mordden spotlights the "plays and the people" that brought queer culture to the American stage, including productions with gay characters, those written by gay creatives, or those "whose sense of parody or outright camp... are at least gay-adjacent." Mordden traces historical themes, including an uptick in sympathetic portrayals of gay men leaving their wives in the 1960s, and the "problem plays" of the '90s and aughts in which gayness served as a "social controversy that the principals discuss." Mordden is most successful with close analysis, as in his consideration of the 1968 *The Boys in the Band* ("wildly funny... and a tiny bit unbelievable, yet so reflective of what gay life was like in New York in 1968 that the show is almost a documentary"). But his semi-stream-of-consciousness style and catty tone too often distract—he describes Truman Capote as possessing the "attitude of a malicious petit four" and pedantically corrects popular pronunciations of *Madame Butterfly*—and while Stonewall is referenced, the history is largely isolated from broader trends in culture and media. Queer theater fans will be piqued, though Mordden's style is a love-it or leave-it proposition. *(June)*

* * *

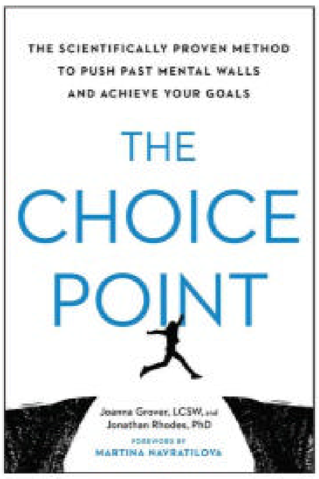
Please Wait by the Coatroom: Reconsidering Race and Identity in American Art

John Yau. Black Sparrow, $28.95 (232p) ISBN 978-1-574-23261-5

In this revelatory volume, poet and critic Yau (*Ruth Asawa*) challenges the art world's omission and misrepresentation of Black, Asian, Latinx, and Native American artists. The author reflects on overlooked 20th-century sculptors, painters, and photographers, examining their works in conversation with artistic luminaries of their age: for example, Yau argues that Cuban biracial artist Wifredo Lam's hallucinatory painting *The Jungle* belongs on the wall opposite Picasso's *Les Demoiselles d'Avignon*, not in the hallway to the coatroom in New York's Museum of Modern Art. (Lam's painting, says Yau, "restores" the African gods that Picasso "reductively" "appropriates" in his, by depicting them as alien, "somewhere between a multi-limbed ideogram and a haunting presence.") Likewise, Yau asserts, Asian American artist Isamu Noguchi's exquisite sculptures should be seen as an expansion beyond Romanian sculptor Constantin Brancusi's minimalism, while Native American artist T.C. Cannon's portraits directly engage the work of photographer Edward S. Curtis, whose "staged photographs ignore the sanctioned genocidal destruction" of Native peoples. Yau's passion energizes these reappraisals, and his writing captures the artworks' physicality via striking observations and reverent attention to detail, as with the "thick swathes of white paint [that] evoke crème fraîche floating on vichyssoise" in Ed Clark's abstract works. This is a necessary corrective. *(June)*

The Choice Point: The Scientifically Proven Method to Push Past Mental Walls and Achieve Your Goals

Joanna Grover and Jonathan Rhodes. Hachette Go, $28 (288p) ISBN 978-0-306-83027-3


THE SCIENTIFICALLY PROVEN METHOD TO PUSH PAST MENTAL WALLS AND ACHIEVE YOUR GOALS
THE CHOICE POINT
Joanna Grover, LCSW, and Jonathan Rhodes, PhD
FOREWORD BY MARTINA NAVRATILOVA

Cognitive therapist Grover and psychologist Rhodes aim to help readers harness "multisensory imagery" to achieve their goals in this smart debut. The authors focus on "choice points" at which one can choose "quick fix" gratification or a long-term goal, and show how to use "Functional Imagery Training" to opt for the latter. Using journaling prompts, the authors guide readers through a FIT program, starting with formulating goals and then making plans to achieve them ("What will you need to change about your story to get closer to your dream?"). Next, readers should draw on multisensory imagery to "visualize" steps, a strategy the authors claim is powerful because "when you engage your senses in your imagination, your body reacts with a physiological response that is close to the real deal." To that end, they explain how to sharpen auditory, visual, and even olfactory senses ("find an odor that is noticeable, powerful, and pleasurable" and clock one's mood and surroundings; later, use the "saved mental picture" to recreate the smell). The authors draw on solid scientific research and make a strong case that "imagery evokes emotion, and emotion shapes behavior more than talking about changing behavior." Readers looking to get off the couch and make some changes will benefit. *(June)*

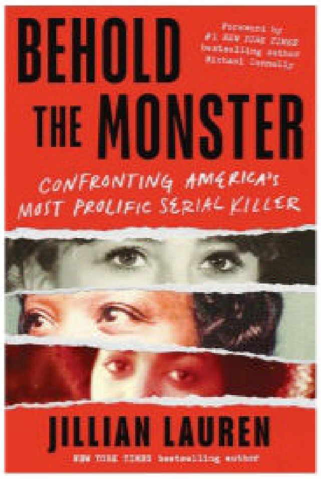
Conspirituality: How New Age Conspiracy Theories Became a Health Threat

Derek Beres, Matthew Remski, and Julian Walker. PublicAffairs, $30 (384p) ISBN 978-1-54170-298-1

The Covid-19 pandemic brought together New Age influencers, alt-health practitioners, and far-right conspiracy theorists in a campaign of fearmongering and antivaccine misinformation, according to this anguished and hard-hitting inquiry. Expanding on their podcast of the same name, the authors characterize "conspirituality" as a synthesis of the female-dominated New Age movement and the male-dominated realm of conspiracy theory, and draw provocative links between conspirituality and fascism, contending, for example, that conspiritualists draw "heavily on old fascist

★ Behold the Monster: Confronting America's Most Prolific Serial Killer

Jillian Lauren. Sourcebooks, $26.99 (496p) ISBN 978-1-72826-775-3


BEHOLD THE MONSTER
Foreword by #1 New York Times bestselling author Michael Connelly
CONFRONTING AMERICA'S MOST PROLIFIC SERIAL KILLER
JILLIAN LAUREN
NEW YORK TIMES bestselling author

Bestseller Lauren (*Some Girls*) recounts the murders of Samuel Little, America's most prolific serial killer, in this wildly original blend of narrative nonfiction and true crime reporting. At the time of publication, officials had confirmed 60 of Little's 93 jailhouse confessions, many of them told for the first time to Lauren, whose notes helped a national task force led by LAPD, FBI, and Texas Ranger officers close many of the cold cases. Attempting to give voice to Little's victims, Lauren reconstructs their final hours based on her interviews with the killer, whom she first met after writing to him while he was imprisoned in the late 2010s in pursuit of a more traditional feature story. Interspersed between those harrowing episodes, Lauren recounts her time researching and interviewing Little before his death in 2020, at which point the killer named her his next of kin, giving her possession of his ashes and the few trinkets he still held onto. In vivid prose ("In Jungian terms, Sam wasn't all shadow, but his shadow was definitely in the driver's seat"), Lauren convincingly sketches Little, his victims, his relatives, and the lawmen and women who dedicated their lives to catching him. True crime fans will find this a unique and disturbing thrill ride. *Agent: Charlie Fusco, TGC Worldwide. (July)* anxieties about sexual potency and deviancy." Elsewhere, the authors document modern yoga's "spiritual and shameful obsession with eugenics," noting the influence of 19th-century eugenicist and bodybuilder Eugen Sandow on the "upper-caste proto-nationalists of India," who sought to "sculpt a new national body, purged of foreign influences and colonial shame." Some of the book's most shocking revelations can be found in profiles of conspirituality influencers like Christiane Northrup, the "grandmother of alt-health gynecology," who advised her followers to withhold sex from partners who were considering getting the Covid-19 vaccine, and Robert F. Kennedy Jr., whose antivax nonprofit, the Children's Health Defense Fund, released a film falsely suggesting that "Black people are naturally immune" to Covid-19. Packed with surprising insights and no-holds-barred takedowns, this is a forceful exposé. *(June)*

Photo Breakdowns: The Stories Behind 100 Portraits

Greg Williams. Whalen Studio, $65 (224p) ISBN 978-1-951-51150-0

Williams walks readers through 100 of his favorite photos captured during his career as an entertainment photographer in his fascinating debut. His process is simple—no special lighting or a production crew, just a shoulder bag and several Leica cameras—and his subjects are a veritable who's who of music and showbiz, including Lady Gaga, Margot Robbie, Lupita Nyong'o, and Sean Penn. Williams divulges tricks of his trade, such as how he made it seem as though Peter Dinklage was walking along the edge of a high-rise rooftop without endangering the actor or using Photoshop (the solution: being creative with props and cropping), but more often Williams cedes control of the "ideal" setup and lets the real, sometimes messy shot reveal itself. The resulting images are some of the volume's most memorable, including a shot of Johnny Depp in the back of a car, moodily lit by only an internal LED light, or a frame showing Cate Blanchett's photoshoot crashed by her toddler. Williams's explanations of his artistic process ("Get the camera as close to the ground as you can, look up, and you start to empower the subject and make it feel larger than it is") prove accessible and illuminating, and add intriguing context to the images themselves. Photography buffs won't be able to look away. Photos. *(May)*

Religion/Spirituality

Remaining You While Raising Them: The Secret Art of Confident Motherhood

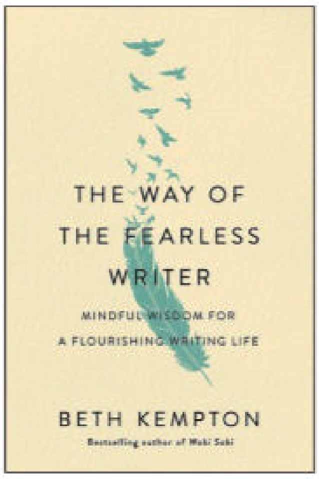
Alli Worthington. Zondervan, $18.99 trade paper (272p) ISBN 978-0-310-35879-4

Business coach Worthington (*Standing Strong*) addresses Christian readers struggling through motherhood in this down-to-earth guide. Studies reveal 56% of moms experience "mom guilt" more than once a week, she writes, but the solution isn't better managing one's children—it's better caring for one's own emotional health. Worthington dispels parenting myths, including that "good moms' kids are obedient" and that good moms can "do it all," and lays out "non-negotiables" that readers should prioritize, including sleep and prayer or breathwork. As well, she urges forging friendships with other moms, though it's crucial to maintain boundaries, especially when it comes to others' judgments: "If someone is trying to get you to stop being yourself... that person is toxic *for you*" and should be avoided. While the messaging can get repetitive, readers will be heartened by the counsel not to "sacrifice yourself at the altar of motherhood" and charmed by the author's accounts of her own parenting disasters, whether nearly "pesto-poisoning" her son or the time her toddlers killed a neighbor's koi fish. This is ideal for Christian moms seeking encouragement, understanding, and a laugh or two. *(Aug.)*

★ The Way of the Fearless Writer: Mindful Wisdom for a Flourishing Writing Life

Beth Kempton. St. Martin's, $19 trade paper (272p) ISBN 978-1-250-89213-3

Writing instructor Kempton (*Wabi Sabi*) outlines in this wise guide a creative practice inspired by Buddhist philosophy. In a departure from advice that centers on "painful effort," Kempton contends that becoming a "fearless writer" requires embracing three principles derived from Buddhism's Gates of Liberation: "desirelessness" teaches writers to "serve the writing, not the ego"; formlessness encourages them to freely "spill" their words onto the page before fashioning them into a shape; and "emptiness" urges writers to see "through [their] fixed ideas about separate selves" so as to write without fear of critique. Kempton weaves abstract musings with practical suggestions; in discussing desirelessness, for example, she suggests "it's the [writing] process that's sacred, not the individual words" and cautions readers against becoming "too attached to what lands on the page." Readers should carve out writing rituals, and once finished, "come back to your day and carry on, as if you haven't just traveled to other worlds and back." Kempton mixes Buddhist principles with writing advice in a seamless, down-to-earth prose, and the prompts, such as emptying one's pockets and writing about "what you carry," are more innovative than the usual fare. Writers on the hunt for a lighter approach to their craft should give this a look. *(July)*



The Forgotten Singer: The Exiled Sister of I.J. and Isaac Bashevis Singer

Maurice Carr. White Goat, $18.95 trade paper (154p) ISBN 979-8-9877078-0-7

The late Carr (*The House of Napolitano*, as Martin Lea) paints a moving yet incomplete portrait of his mother, Esther Singer Kreitman (1891–1954), the little-known novelist sister of Yiddish writers I.J. Singer and Isaac Bashevis Singer. Carr describes growing up in London during WWI under the threat of German bombs, and listening to his mother's stories about her gloomy Warsaw childhood: she was neglected by her mother, who left Kreitman in the care of a wet nurse who stored baby and crib beneath a table. Despite chronic sight problems, Kreitman devoured Yiddish fiction and wrote short stories from a young age. She later had an unhappy marriage with Carr's "gallivanting" father, but persevered to publish three novels in Yiddish, which Carr eventually translated into English. Kreitman's relationship with her brothers was frequently strained, writes the author, and while Isaac eventually dedicated a book to her, her name was misspelled in the dedication. There are some worthy insights into Kreitman's psyche ("With the elusive [Isaac] my habitually overeffusive mother is at a loss for words"), but Carr's tendency to weave in less intriguing recollections from his own life make for a scattershot narrative that does little to restore Kreitman to her place in 20th-century Yiddish literature. The definitive account of Kreitman's life remains to be written. *(July)*

Reverse Meditation: How to Use Your Pain and Most Difficult Emotions as the Doorway to Inner Freedom

Andrew Holecek. Sounds True, $19.99 (240p) ISBN 978-1-649-63105-3

In this enlightening entry, meditation teacher Holecek (*Dream Yoga*) introduces readers to the practice of reverse meditation, so called because it entails "revers[ing] our relationship to unwanted experiences, which means going directly into them." Holecek opens with the concept of "contraction," or the tendency to "retreat from reality... when things start to hurt," positing that "super contractors" such as anger and aggression trigger this reaction to protect the self amid crisis. As a corrective, Holecek outlines three meditation types, beginning with referential meditation (which involves a "hitching post" such as breath or a mantra) and nonreferential meditation (the removal of the hitching post for "formless" mindfulness), followed by reverse meditation. Reverse meditation is broken into four steps: practitioners can observe their pain; be with the pain "without commentary"; analyze the nature of the pain; and finally "yoke or unite with" the pain. In so doing, the author suggests, readers can transform contractions into opportunities to generate compassion for the self and others. Despite drawing on a host of sources in way that can feel rather kitchen sink—within a few pages he cites T.S. Eliot, Jewish scholar Zvi Ish-Shalom and British scientist John Wren-Lewis—Holecek's plan is grounded in an intuitive logic, and the principles are outlined clearly enough for nonspecialists to grasp. Those seeking a more freeing meditation approach will want to pick this up. *(July)*

Self-Love Potions: Herbal Recipes & Rituals to Make You Fall in Love with You

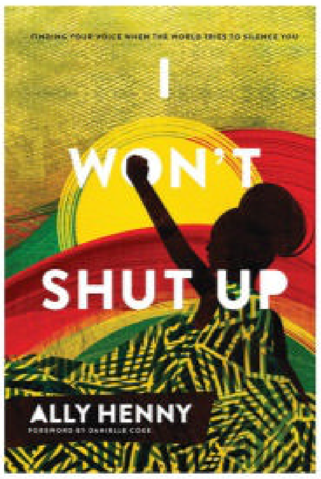
Cosmic Valeria. Leaping Hare, $20 (144p) ISBN 978-0-711-28105-9

Artist Valeria (*Moon Witch Oracle*) offers an eclectic mix of recipes, spells, and rituals intended to "heal your body and mind" in this fun compendium. Entries range from garden-variety tips, including using an aloe mask "for an extra glow," to the less expected, such as healing spiritual and emotional issues with the help of elderflower ice pops. Elsewhere, she prescribes a nasturtium pesto "for manifestation" and recommends readers "write what you would like to attract" on the leaves before adding them to the food processor with basil leaves and pine nuts, and promises a shortbread cookie recipe can restore one's "zest for life" thanks to its inclusion of bright blue cornflowers, which symbolize the "passion of youth." Despite a few weaker entries—among them an "energy bath for empaths" that essentially entails getting into a tub with a crystal and letting the water work its healing "magic"—Valeria's voice is chummy and lighthearted (of the pesto: "If making your own pasta sauce from scratch using flowers isn't an act of self-love, I don't know what is"), and readers will appreciate how her modern approach casts self-love rituals as an opportunity to "carve some time out just for yourself." This is delightful. *(July)*

I Won't Shut Up: Finding Your Voice When the World Tries to Silence You

Ally Henny. Baker, $24.99 (224p) ISBN 978-1-540-90265-8

In her impassioned debut, Henny, vice president of a Black Christian collective, motivates readers to "talk back to [racial] injustice" in a culture where Black women are criticized for everything from their hairstyles to "taking up more space than white people... think you should." The author recounts her childhood in a small, predominantly white Missouri town where she was lauded for academic achievements, but nevertheless faced racism from classmates. As an adult, she attended a largely white church where it became clear that even when racism is acknowledged, it's often done in a way that serves the majority: despite "passionate declarations against racism that could elicit hearty 'amens' ", insidious marginalization in church culture went undiscussed. She explains that using one's voice can take different forms, from calling out racism in everyday life to advocating for change on Capitol Hill. And while readers might meet pushback, they shouldn't let others' feelings silence them, though Henny acknowledges that having to leave once-welcoming spaces (such as a church) due to racism or microaggressions can still feel like a loss. Throughout, Henny is candid about her own path to self-acceptance—"I wasn't always as outspoken about my loudness, my Blackness, or my womanness"—and her discussions of how racism can manifest in overt and subtle ways, from the church pew to the classroom, are smart and perceptive. Readers will be empowered. *(June)*



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FICTION

Even If the Sky is Falling, *edited by Taj McCoy.* Canary Street, ISBN 978-1-335-45255-9, May

Wraithbound *Tim Akers.* Baen, ISBN 978-1-982192-55-6, Apr.

NONFICTION

The Lagoon: Encounters with the Wales of San Ignacio *James Michael Dorsey.* Diversion, ISBN 978-1-63576-842-8, May

Wealth Without Cash: Supercharge Your Real Estate Investing with Subject-to, Seller Financing, and Other Creative Deals *Pace Morby.* BiggerPockets, ISBN 978-1-947200-88-3, May

Children's/YA

Picture Books

Sometimes I Am Furious

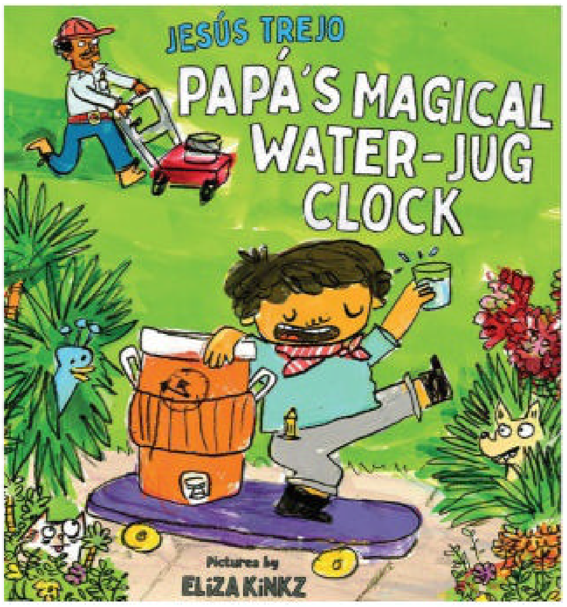
Timothy Knapman, illus. by Joe Berger. Penguin Workshop, $18.99 (32p) ISBN 978-0-5935-2105-2

As cartoon art shows the tan-skinned, redheaded child narrator of this picture book sharing cookies with another child and helping their interracial parents with the dishes, readers are assured that "sometimes I'm a princess who is thoughtful, brave, and sweet.// Sometimes I'm the kindest fairy you could hope to meet." But there are times when things don't go the child's way, and the response is full-fledged fury: "And sometimes I am furious." Various events result in the child engaging in frustrated behaviors as they rail against the world ("I don't want THIS!/ It's just NO GOOD!"), then collapse into a tearful heap. Previous collaborators Knapman and Berger (*Superhero Mom*) offer standard self-regulation advice by way of their young exemplar: seek out an empathic adult (in this case, Grandma), and try some grounding exercises ("I take deep breaths./ I count to ten./ I sing my happy song"). While 24-7 equilibrium may not be possible, the creators suggest that knowing it's within reach can be a big comfort. Or, as the narrator puts it: "And now when I am// FURIOUS!// It's not for very long." Ages 3–5. *(June)*

How to Count to One (And Don't Even Think About Bigger Numbers!)

Caspar Salmon, illus. by Matt Hunt. Nosy Crow, $17.99 (32p) ISBN 979-8-88777-024-6

"Hello! Welcome to a fun new counting book," chirps the omniscient narrator of this amusing concept title. "Are you ready to start counting?" Almost immediately, however, it's evident that Salmon, making his picture book debut, has created a narrator with an obsession: never counting above the number one. See the two big purple whales cavorting in the water? The narrator invites readers to count only the single sausage that's improbably bouncing from one whale's waterspout. On a page showing five mallards engaged in various anthropomorphized activities, the narrator insists on counting solely the inline-skating fowl: "No counting the other ducks, please!" Via shape-driven characters and washes of bright color, illustrations by Hunt (the Little People, Big Dreams series) exude a mid-century modern playfulness. But what drives the book forward is the comic gold of an authority figure gone wild: "What?! Did you think you would learn to count to big numbers like a HUNDRED?! WELL, NO!" When this solo interest propels readers through to the end, they should be inspired to go back through, counting everything in sight: 100 items in all. Ages 3–6. *(June)*



Trejo and Kinkz balance fantasy and reality in a new picture book (reviewed on this page).

The Ice Cream Vanishes

Julia Sarcone-Roach. Knopf, $18.99 (40p) ISBN 978-0-5933-0985-8

When snack-obsessed Squirrel, convinced it has a magical ability to make tasty treats disappear, finds a dropped ice cream cone, it enlists as its assistant Bear, who takes long enough to awaken that the frozen treat vanishes from (i.e., melts on) a sun-warmed rock. But the two soon stumble on the perfect stage for further prestidigitation: an ice cream truck momentarily abandoned by its human owner. Squirrel hits on just the magic words—"Bear, you've got to try this!"—and before a forest animal audience, Bear makes a pink ice cream cone "vanish" in one slurp. Inspired, the animals don waffle and sugar cones as hats and swarm the truck to make some magic of their own: a bunny gets covered in soft serve, and a turtle rolls an ice cream sandwich out the door. Fans of the Norma and Belly series and other bear-studded books from Sarcone-Roach (*There Are No Bears in This Bakery*) are sure to lap up this work—heavily stroked acrylic, gouache, and pen and pencil illustrations have all the appeal of a rainbow cone generously sprinkled with visual jokes. Ages 3–7. *Agent: Paul Rodeen, Rodeen Literary. (June)*

Joy Takes Root

Gwendolyn Wallace, illus. by Ashleigh Corrin. Kokila, $18.99 (32p) ISBN 978-0-593-40678-6

Making her picture book debut, Wallace centers a Black-presenting family's time gardening together as a means of looking forward and back. "The most important thing to remember," Grammy tells young Joy as they together tour Grammy's expansive South Carolina garden, "is that plants are our friends and our family." Pointing out all of the flora she cultivates, Grammy next offers up information about herbs' medicinal properties and teaches Joy how to plant seeds of her own. A moving series of spreads observes Grammy paying homage to the family's ancestors—"the ways they took care of this same soil" and the way their love is ready to be passed on—before inviting Joy to both "put our intention into the soil" and consider how "each drop of water holds the memories of all the water before it." Textural hand-drawn and digital illustrations by Corrin (*Layla's Happiness*) highlight the garden in colorful detail, showing fruitful connections via images of a bumble bee perched on a squash blossom and of Joy, seated on the globe, resting her hand on the earth. It's a reap-what-you-sow telling that considers what's been given and what's yet to come. Ages 4–8. *Author's agent: Wendi Gu, Sanford J. Greenburger Assoc. Illustrator's agent: Nicole Geiger, Full Circle Literary. (June)*

★ Papá's Magical Water-Jug Clock

Jesús Trejo, illus. by Eliza Kinkz. Minerva, $18.99 (48p) ISBN 978-1-6626-5104-5

This vividly written picture book debut from comedian and actor Trejo offers a rare look at a day on the job from a child's perspective. Jesús loves everything about helping his father with the Latinx-cued family's landscaping business on

continued on p. 66

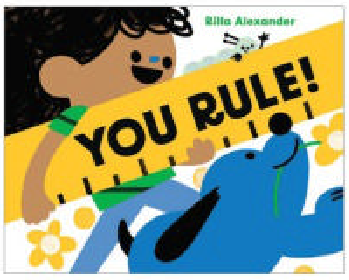
AD ASTRA

Ten picture books offer loving encouragement for new graduates.

★ You Rule!

Rilla Alexander. Chronicle, $17.99 (36p) ISBN 978-1-79721-179-4

What if one could easily measure traditionally unquantifiable thoughts and feelings? Alexander's got it covered in this boldly colored picture book, which spurs readers to explore emotional nuance around concepts including how much one knows and how much one can do. On each spread, an open-ended question appears for readers to ponder alongside a blue-nosed child protagonist portrayed with brown skin, a perky blue pup, and a helpful green caterpillar. As the figures interact on each page, a range of potential answers appears alongside the query, like a deftly organized word cloud. In a scene asking "How happy are you?" the trio of characters travel down a grassy hill, the child on a bike, with words and phrases beneath their feet ranging from "down in the dumps" to "walking on air." An additional visual story unfolds as the caterpillar becomes a chrysalis and then a butterfly, and a yellow feline with black stripes—mimicking the unit ticks on a ruler—joins the team. A solid model for naming feelings, this enthusiastic read offers up inspiration perfect for those taking stock. Ages 3–5. *(Apr.)*



Be Wild, Little One

Olivia Hope, illus. by Daniel Egnéus. Bloomsbury, $18.99 (32p) ISBN 978-1-5476-1126-3

With a bouncy, joyful urgency, Hope's debut directs readers to embrace a bold inner spirit and explore a natural world filled with enchantment and possibility. An unseen narrator invokes the titular refrain through rhyming stanzas that state how one might wring the most out of life's experiences: "Chase tornadoes/ high and low./ Storms will come,/ but storms will go.// Run with wolves/ through mountain snow./ Be wild, little one." Meanwhile, a child portrayed with light skin and floppy brown hair exuberantly performs variations on the narrated actions. Egnéus's ethereal collage-style illustrations depict the child riding on a elephant's trunk, rowing a boat above a swirl of colorful fish in the "deepest blues," and dancing with fireflies that flash like confetti across a green sky. It's a lively reminder of how the call of the wild can stir one's soul. Ages 3–6. *(Feb.)*

Just One Little Light

Kat Yeh, illus. by Isabelle Arsenault. HarperCollins/Balzer + Bray, $19.99 (32p) ISBN 978-0-06-309496-3

Velvety gouache, charcoal, and pastel spreads by Arsenault ground Yeh's message in this metaphorical picture book about finding one's way. "When you find yourself/ in the dark," the lines begin, "remind yourself/ you always have a light." After soft billows of gray and black overtake the sun, obscuring the landscape, a pale-skinned hand reaches out to touch the bending stem of a strange flower. The blossom glows a shining aqua, showing the way forward. Swampy darkness still looms ahead, but the bloom "is enough to begin." Soon, more children appear, shown with various skin tones; as a new world comes into view, their collaborative lights illuminate strange, fern-like plants. Though individual gifts may seem small, they are enough to get things started, suggests this inspirational work on moving forward in collaboration and faith. Ages 4–8. *(June)*

Everything Possible

Fred Small, illus. by Alison Brown. Nosy Crow, $17.99 (32p) ISBN 979-8-88777-022-2

Musician Small's well-known folk song is adapted here into a comforting picture book lullaby about acceptance, individuality, and love. In the shadowy hush of night, a child portrayed with tan skin readies for bed inside a seaside home. Small's uplifting verses then unfold, delivering a reassuring message: "You can be anybody you want to be,/ you can love whoever you will,/ you can travel any country where your heart leads/ and know I will love you still." Brown's delicately scribbly illustrations shift from night to day, depicting the child frolicking in the surf, tending a garden with friends, greeting neighbors, and strolling through the park observing intersectionally diverse community members. Exhibiting themes of unconditional love and living an authentic life, this tune turned tome offers supportive tentpoles for anyone forging their own path. A note on the song's origin and a QR code linking to both story and song conclude. Ages 4–8. *(May)*

Repeat After Me: Big Things to Say Every Day

Jazmyn Simon and Dulé Hill, illus. by Shamar Knight-Justice. Random House, $18.99 (32p) ISBN 978-0-593-42697-5

Actors and married collaborators Hill and Simon share their take on fostering self-love in children via powerful affirmations. An introductory authors' note suggests that "when you say affirmations... you are actually rewiring your brain to believe what you say," and instructs caregivers on how to create a meaningful ritual by "having your child repeat the affirmation back to you, out loud, in first person." What follows is a series of "I am" statements ("I am BRAVE," "I am IMPORTANT," "I am LOVED," and others), each of which is followed by brief rhyming verse that expands on the theme: "I am CHERISHED/ Just as the dawn of each day/ is wondrous and new,/ the most valuable treasure/ you have is *you.*" Knight-Justice's digital artwork depicts kids with brown skin of varying tones exuding confidence and joy as they act out the accompanying text, modeling big concepts wrapped in an attainable, welcome family practice. Ages 4–8. *(May)*

I Hope You Will Know

Jaren Ahlmann, illus. by Pete Olczyk. Collective Book Studio, $17.95 (32p) ISBN 978-1-951412-98-2

In this hopeful love letter, a caretaker supplies an earnest checklist of things they want a child to remember "as you wonder and marvel and grow." Each spread features a pithy all-caps maxim ("DREAM BIG," "SHARE YOUR KINDNESS") followed by rhyming couplets that elaborate on the idea: "Always look for the wonders, no matter how small,/ For a heart that is grateful finds joy in them all." Olczyk's textured, light-filled artwork flows indoors and out, focusing on figures portrayed with varying abilities and skin tones. Across sunny, bucolic settings, a gaggle of boisterous children sporting colorful slickers jump in puddles, while others encounter natural landscapes and interact playfully. The loving reassurance and sentiment on display provide readers with their own cheering section as they venture forth: "And wherever you go and whatever you do,/ I hope you will know I will always love you!" Ages 4–8. *(Apr.)*

Little Lessons

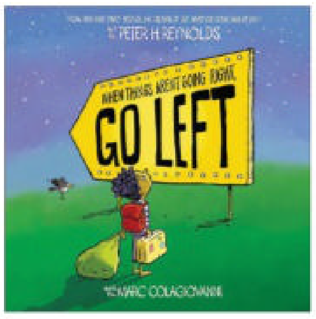
Seymour Chwast. MineditionUS, $12.99 (40p) ISBN 978-1-66265-117-5

Revealing timeless truths about human nature, proverbs' vivid metaphorical language proves visual catnip for Chwast's graphic design–driven compendium of 18 sayings, which range from cautionary to YOLO. "A leopard cannot change its spots," declares a hand-lettered headline as the digitally colored pen-and-ink image shows a growling, green-eyed feline covered in a bright patchwork of shapes. Another spread takes readers to a polar landscape populated by walruses, bundled up ice-fishers—and a waltzing couple in full formal dress who seem indifferent to the ice cracking underneath their feet. The lesson? "If you walk on thin ice... you might as well dance." The title deftly manages expectations around the grouping, which is less about big revelations and deep insights, and more about the pleasure of savoring "little lessons" pleasingly wrought. An afterword concludes. Ages 4–8. *(Apr.)*

When Things Aren't Going Right, Go Left

Marc Colagiovanni, illus. by Peter H. Reynolds. Orchard, $18.99 (32p) ISBN 978-1-338-83118-4

Resilience and optimism win the day—and the long game—in an encouraging fable about finding one's way. One gloomy, rainy day, when "Absolutely, positively, NOTHING was going right," a young protagonist loaded down with baggage opts for a course correction, explaining: "So... I decided to go left." The child first leaves behind a crate full of worries—fiery red gremlins who yell, "Where are you going?" Further down the line, the protagonist sheds a sack of bellowing green doubts and approaches a diving board that brings back memories of a previous failed dive, where ditching more luggage eventually leads to exhilarating success. Heading home, the child's gradually retrieved bags boast quieter contents that, Colagiovanni writes, "weren't so hard to handle anymore." Scenes rendered in Reynolds's bold, loose lines introduce a protagonist with brown skin as well as a bird companion, who travel through pages with mottled backgrounds that moodily shift hue. It's a straightforward take on managing emotions that's just right for new grads. Ages 4–8. *(Mar.)*



You Will Do Great Things

Amerie, illus. by Raissa Figueroa. Roaring Brook, $18.99 (40p) ISBN 978-1-250-81702-0

When a magically sparkling photo of a relative catches the eye of a young child portrayed with brown skin, they are swept into a dreamy fantasy world of imagined adventures. As the dauntless child dances, climbs among trees with gauzy leaved branches, rides a brilliantly plumed phoenix-like bird, and collects a rainbow of glowing orbs, they meet and are spurred on by figures who seem to be ancestors, cued as Black and of East Asian heritage. Figueroa blends elements of reality and reverie in fancifully hued digital landscapes. Songwriter Amerie's rhyming verse encourages self-discovery ("Listen for that teeny voice// That's always been inside.// It will help you find your way.// Trust it to be your guide") and reminds readers that the support and love of family—even those who came before—surrounds them always. "You will be the things/ Those before us couldn't be.// And you will carry in your heart// The power of their dreams." Ages 4–8. *(Mar.)*

A Good Deed Can Grow

Jennifer Chambliss Bertman, illus. by Holly Hatam. Little, Brown/ Ottaviano, $18.99 (32p) ISBN 978-0-316-35113-3

Positivity pulses through the pages of this picture book about the effects of kind and thoughtful actions and the many ways one might spread good in the world. Noting how a kindness gradually emanates from its source, Chambliss Bertman's simile-laden text likens a good deed to a seed, a ripple on the water, a sunbeam, and a smile: "A good deed/ can grow like a smile.// A smile that calms worries and nerves,/ warms hearts... //or welcomes you home." Hatam's bustling mixed-media scenes display an intersectionally diverse community in which a brigade of grinning young people do nice things: visiting a sick friend, reading at the senior center, cleaning up litter, and planting a community garden next to a gigantic gray factory belching waste. While the lines acknowledge that some problems can feel too big to solve, this read offers a sunny emotional reset to inspire do-gooders. Ages 4–8. *(Feb.)*

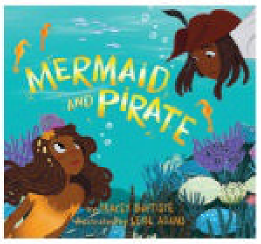
MAKING A SPLASH

Black mermaids take to the water in three picture books.

Mermaid and Pirate

Tracey Baptiste, illus. by Leisl Adams. Algonquin, $18.99 (32p) ISBN 978-1-64375-077-4

In Baptiste's sweet tale of oceanic connection, a mermaid and a pirate, each portrayed with brown skin, exult in storms. "She liked to roll with the waves and dance to the beat of the rain on the sea.... He liked how the wind whipped the water and snapped the ropes." When lightning breaks the mast of the pirate's ship, and both beings move to secure it, the mermaid becomes tangled in the pirate's net. Though their attempts at communication reveal a language barrier (the pirate hears "Gloop" when the mermaid says "Thank you"; the mermaid hears "Aarrgh" when the pirate says "You're welcome"), they become friends, together engaging in undersea adventures. After a separation, the two even meet again later, swimming together toward the horizon. Using paneled spreads and dual perspectives, Adams's animation-style art is an ideal match for Baptiste's lighthearted story, which illustrates how being different need be no impediment to bonding. Ages 3–7. *(Apr.)*



The Mermaid Princesses

Maya Cameron-Gordon, illus. by Mirelle Ortega. HarperCollins, $18.99 (40p) ISBN 978-0-06-320525-3

In this picture book about collaborative power, three Black-presenting mermaid princesses each have a different gift. Anaya is a sweet-natured songstress, Shante is a bold explorer, and Kianna is a diligent student—and each one of them dreams of becoming queen. When they ask their mother which one will be crowned, bickering along the way, the monarch admonishes them: "*Whoever* is to be queen must first and foremost be a good sister and protector." Encountering a baby dolphin in distress, the sisters each use their strengths to save it, an event that reveals an answer to the question of queendom: "The ocean needs a queen that is strong and fierce as a shark, as clever and wise as an octopus, and as kind and caring as a dolphin." Cameron-Gordon handily demonstrates the importance of teamwork in protecting the greater good, while Ortega's candy-hued waterscapes and ornate, thoughtfully rendered character designs offer the feel of an animated short. Ages 4–8. *(Mar.)*

The Mermaids of Jamaica

Claudia Bellante, illus. by Herikita. Crocodile, $18.95 (32p) ISBN 978-1-62371-792-6

In this addition to the Against All Odds series, Bellante centers in on Port Antonio, Jamaica, to create a brief portrait of a group of real-life girls, aged seven to 18, who make up the island nation's only synchronized swim team. Described as "normal girls who study and eat ice cream," they're also "capable of something rare and wonderful: spinning around in the water like butterflies in the sky." As they prepare for two months of training in China, they receive coaching from Russian Gold Medalist Olga, and they take care of each other, sharing hopes and dreams. Unadorned, documentary-style prose relates sacrifices made by the swimmers and their families in the face of economic pressures and family separation, describing how, "for the mermaids of Port Antonio, synchronized swimming is a magical antidote to all this." Herikita's saturated, folk-style art twines images rooted in the island's natural environment with imagery reflective of the girls' interests and the coach's background. An author's note concludes. Ages 5–8. *(Apr.)*

continued from p. 63

Saturdays. Wearing a jaunty red neck bandana, Jesús takes in "a tasty mixed smell of oil, gasoline, and yesterday's cut grass" that emanates from the work van. Today, Papá has made Jesús the "boss" of the big orange water jug, which is also, Papá says, a magical clock—"When the jug is empty, that means, time to go home." But though Mamá reminds the duo to "drink lots of agua," Jesús is elaborately unstinting with the water, splashing it on his face and offering it to every animal he sees. By 10:30 a.m., none remains for drinking, and there are still 11 houses to go. Assuring a worried Jesús that he won't be fired, Papá explains that making things fun—for example by pretending a water jug has magical powers—doesn't obviate the day's responsibilities, then offers an opportunity to refill the bucket. Exuberantly scribbled pencil, ink, watercolor, gouache, and crayon drawings by Kinkz (*Goldie's Guide to Grandchilding*) give the animated prose an exuberant immediacy and plenty of heart. Ages 4–8. *Author's agent: Albert Lee, United Talent Agency. Illustrator's agent: Stephen Barr, Writers House. (June)*

You Go First

Ariel Bernstein, illus. by Marc Rosenthal. S&S/Wiseman, $18.99 (48p) ISBN 978-1-6659-1151-1

There's a new, taller, curvier slide on the playground, and close friends Cat and Duck have two very different feelings about it: Duck is outwardly eager, and Cat clearly is not, though the kitty doesn't admit it. In the name of being "a very good friend," Cat suggests that Duck consider the other playground options: "Duck, do you want to go on the swings first? Or in the sandbox? The sand is looking very sandy today." Finally, after creating several delays, and insisting Duck don wholly unnecessary protective gear, Cat's anxieties pour out. "Duck, I must warn you. If you go down that slide, you may fall! And scream! And cry!" Duck sadly acquiesces, "even if I was looking forward to it," but the story keeps going, ending on a note of small triumph for both of the friends. In a second match-up from collaborators Bernstein and Rosenthal (*We Love Fishing!*), character-forward playground vignettes, rendered in sturdy pencil outlines and cheery digital color, are comically in sync with the interplay and mood of the deadpan, emotionally astute narration and dialogue. Ages 4–8. *Author's agent: Sean McCarthy, Sean McCarthy Literary. Illustrator's agent: Holly McGhee, Pippin Properties. (June)*

Fiction

102 Days of Lying About Lauren

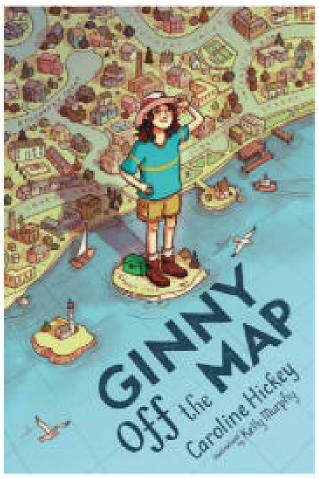
Maura Jortner. Holiday House, $18.99 (224p) ISBN 978-0-8234-5362-7

Having been abandoned by her mother at America's most famous amusement park, in Florida, tall-for-her-age 12-year-old Lauren "Mouse" Suszek hides in plain sight by posing as a 16-year-old park employee. She manages the deception admirably for the titular 102 days, living at the top of the Haunted House of Horrors and logging her self-imposed "Rules to Live By" and "Lies Told." She even befriends Tanner, a park employee who's also son to the park's CEO, and whose sister bears a striking resemblance to Mouse. But Mouse's luck changes quickly when Cat, a seventh grader who uses a cane, arrives and claims to be Mouse's cousin just as a tornado forces everyone in the park to take shelter. Huddled in an unstable building, Mouse struggles to confront her grief and anger alongside a now-injured Tanner, who is navigating his own tumultuous family dynamic, and suspicious but concerned Cat. Industrious Mouse's colloquial first-person voice layers her feelings about her circumstances with the logistics around her solo survival, resulting in a moving debut from Jortner that retains a sense of adventure while lightly exploring an experience of abandonment. Protagonists cue as white; the secondary cast is racially diverse. Ages 8–12. *Agent: Rena Rossner, Deborah Harris Agency. (June)*

★ Ginny Off the Map

Caroline Hickey, illus. by Kelly Murphy. Little, Brown/Ottaviano, $16.99 (320p) ISBN 978-0-316-32462-5

In the early 2010s, 11-year-old Ginny, an aspiring geoscientist, works to cope with a summer of change in her frequently moving Army family. She anticipates that their next move, from North Carolina to Maryland, will be difficult, but she's gutted when her ER doctor father—"the one person who really, truly gets me"—is immediately deployed to Afghanistan. Things get even worse when her much-anticipated geography camp is canceled and she's enrolled in a disastrous jewelry course instead; meanwhile, an already contentious relationship with her athletic 12-year-old sister Allie turns venomous as Allie seems to make friends with ease. Constantly taking in geography facts, doodling maps, and adulating oceanographic cartographer Marie Tharp, Ginny nevertheless grows more miserable, worrying about her father and fearing she'll never understand his parting advice that she follow her "true north." Through Ginny's experiences, Hickey (*Heroes and Horses*) portrays the full emotional cycle of deployment with accuracy and compassion. Immersive first-person chapters, which each open with a geography fact, accurately convey the comfort and the isolation that can accompany an intense special interest alongside Ginny's broadening recognition of the needs of the people around her. Occasional fine-lined b&w illustrations by Murphy depict pivotal scenes. Protagonists cue as white; the secondary cast is racially diverse. Ages 8–12. *Author's agent: Alex Glass, Glass Literary Management. (June)*



★ Half Moon Summer

Elaine Vickers. Peachtree, $17.99 (288p) ISBN 978-1-68263-539-1

Though they became instant pals as infants born on the same day in Half Moon Bay, Calif., 12-year-olds Drew and Mia haven't seen each other since Mia moved to Sacramento. But now, 12 years later, she's spending the summer with her Gram in Half Moon Bay while her father tends to a sick relative in Alaska. Since Drew's best friend recently moved away, and Mia doesn't know any other kids in town, the pair quickly fall into a routine of running each morning with Drew's father. As the summer unfurls, the duo bond over familial conflicts: Drew has been struggling to accept his father's amyotrophic lateral sclerosis diagnosis, while Mia worries about her family's financial and housing-related troubles. Together, they begin preparing for the town's half-marathon, and while it initially feels as if they're "running away from what scares us," they find that their training helps them make the most of every day in the face of uncertain futures. Via distinct dual perspectives that alternate between Drew's POV, told in compassionate prose, and Mia's, conveyed in rhythmic verse, Vickers (*Like Magic*) vividly captures one emotionally turbulent summer filled with a friendship's mutual trust and support. Characters cue as white. Ages 8–12. *Agent: Ammi-Joan Paquette, Erin Murphy Literary. (June)*

The Islands of Elsewhere

Heather Fawcett. Rocky Pond, $17.99 (224p) ISBN 978-0-593530-52-8

Arriving from Vancouver to the tiny town of Misty Cove with their mother and baby brother Theodore, a trio of sisters become immediately enchanted with their ailing grandfather's bluff-situated property, which overlooks the sea and includes the Fairy Islands: Fairy, Little Fairy, and Ghost. Cast by locals as a magical liminal place, the islands figure prominently in legends about the sisters' great-great-grandmother Lucy Juniper, a pirate—and possibly a witch—who may have left behind buried treasure. Though scornful of whimsies and unwilling to believe that the girls may be the recipients of familial magic, pragmatic 10-year-old Bee enlists Hattie, 12, and Plum, eight, on a quest to locate the loot, imagining that finding it would allow the family to assist their beloved, increasingly forgetful granddaddy. Via a cozy, magic-dusted family story that features a bewitching setting (the remote village seems to "blend into the wilderness at the edges"), Fawcett (*The School Between Winter and Fairyland*) creates endearing and affectionate characters with realistic tensions—especially between scientifically minded Bee and her more imaginative family members—whose individual strengths help solve the central mystery. Protagonists default to white. Ages 8–12.

Agent: Brianne Johnson, HG Literary. (June)

The McNifficents

Amy Makechnie. Simon & Schuster, $17.99 (320p) ISBN 978-1-6659-1898-5

A proper miniature schnauzer and self-appointed nanny seeks to tame his unruly charges in a lively role-reversing family story by Makechnie (*Ten Thousand Tries*). When an event on the first day of summer sees the McNiff clan again ejected from the local lake, pup Lord Tennyson, "a short, middle-aged gentleman with white whiskers and a royal pedigree," resolves to change things by season's end. The children—ranging from 18 months to 13 years—each serve up their own style of disorderly conduct, however, while their free-spirited, largely hands-off parents are often in the wings. But keeping constant watch and employing well-timed barks, frowns, licks, and tugs is only the beginning for Tenny. In addition to doing nanny research and attempting to teach the children basic dog-care tasks, he must take on rescue missions (e.g., pulling toddler Sweetums from the lake) and check his raw canine instincts around the family's baby chicks. Makechnie invites readers into a sometimes frenetic household that's frequently suffused with love and laughs. Humor abounds in quirky details—avian creatures named after *Downton Abbey* characters, Tenny's formal inner dialogue and love of the film *Mary Poppins*—while the siblings' bickering, teasing, and supportive interactions ring true. The human family reads as white. Ages 8–12. *Agent: Zoe Sandler, ICM Partners. (June)*

The Not-So-Chosen One (Spellbinders #1)

Andrew Auseon, illus. by Lisa Weber. Labyrinth Road, $14.99 (432p) ISBN 978-0-593-48271-1

An RPG-playing seventh grader is whisked away to a land of real magic in this memorable tale by Auseon (*Freak Magnet*). While attending a gaming convention, Niara—a cool, purple-haired teen—approaches tween Ben Whitlock to take on the role of the Chosen One in what Ben assumes is an elaborate live-action role-playing game. Eager to play along, Ben believes her claim that it's his destiny to save Lux, her fantastical home world, until following Niara through a magical portal transports them to the real-life land of Lux. Though Ben feels he's not the actual Chosen One Niara was looking for, he'll happily pretend if it means he can be the hero of a grand adventure. And in Lux, he realizes that he has magical powers of his own, uncovering new possibilities. Through subversions of familiar fantasy tropes and a thoroughly engaging plot, Auseon conjures an idiosyncratic realm replete with endearing characters, madcap humor, and hijinks-filled adventure. Sketch-like b&w illustrations by Weber (the Museum Mysteries series) depict NPC-style character profiles reminiscent of D&D campaigns. Ben and Niara read as white. Ages 8–12. *Agent: Erica Bauman and Jennifer Gates, Aevitas Creative Management. (June)*

Food Fight

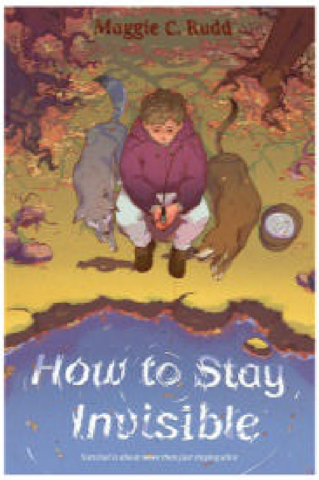
Linda B. Davis. Fitzroy, $14.95 paper (248p) ISBN 978-1-64603-343-0

A tween struggles to combat criticism and bullying surrounding his eating habits in Davis's empathetic debut, which addresses avoidant/restrictive food intake disorder. Sixth grader Ben Snyder enters the Crestwood Middle School cafeteria ready to eat the same packed lunch he's had daily since starting elementary school: a plain bagel, pretzels, and two Hershey's Kisses. Ben has never questioned his need to only eat foods that his brain registers as "safe" until a classmate begins taunting him for his diet, and family members, including his father, start insisting on Ben eating whatever he's served. Pressures mount as a school trip draws near that involves two overnight stays and a menu that only includes classic colonial American cuisine. While Ben's father is certain that the trip will force him to eat more broadly, Ben worries about starvation and social survival, especially as his friends start aligning with a bully. A secondary plot in which Ben repeatedly resists friendship with an unpopular classmate adds nuance to his internal conflicts in working to both understand and communicate his needs. Honest-feeling prose and thoughtful characterizations capably drive themes of self-acceptance and self-discovery in this gently humorous novel. Characters present as white. Ages 9–12. *(June)*

★ How to Stay Invisible

Maggie C. Rudd. Farrar, Straus and Giroux, $17.99 (240p) ISBN 978-0-3743-9033-4

Rudd (*I'll Hold Your Hand*) weaves an uplifting tale of connection and found family featuring an unhoused tween. Twelve-year-old, white-cued Raymond is used to his unreliable parents constantly moving house. So when he starts at yet another middle school—this time in River Mill, N.C.—he does what he does best: keeps his head down and tries to stay invisible. But when his parents abruptly leave, abandoning him and his dog Rosie outside their locked, rented trailer, Raymond takes to the woods to avoid state care. Thus begins months of living in a tree hollow, where he contends with wild animals and faces hunger, bitter cold, and sickness. Keeping his situation secret, Raymond continues attending school and makes new friends—classmates, adults, and animals alike—who inadvertently help Raymond come to terms with his harsh reality and prompt him to question the long-term effects of his solitude and secrecy. Via introspective third-person prose, Rudd juxtaposes a typical middle school milieu of crushes and school projects against Raymond's harrowing position. A hearty dose of existentialism, depictions of necessary wilderness skills, and ruminations on the perseverance of the human spirit permeate this meditative survival read. Ages 10–14. *Agent: Mary Cummings, Great River Literary. (June)*



The Sinister Secrets of Singe (The Sinister Secrets #1)

Sean Ferrell, illus. by Graham Carter. Pixel+Ink, $18.99 (384p) ISBN 978-1-6459-5183-4

A boy's determined search for his father lends emotional heft to this steampunk-inflected series starter, a middle grade debut from Ferrell (*The Snurtch*). Long overseen by distant mother Marie and robot caretaker Elijah, 11-year-old Noah isn't allowed outside the family's home, which grows larger each night, spiraling noisily and by unknown means into an ever-widening edifice at the edge of industrial city Liberty. After stumbling upon the schematics for a robot designed by his absent inventor father—whose "terrible mistake" once cost Liberty lives—Noah wonders if any of the man's creations remain, and how they might be connected to the domicile's growth. Noah soon unlocks an emissary of his father, and is swept up in a desperate quest to find his dad, fighting off terrifying machines and joining Winona, a girl his age, and her band of smugglers. Tackling questions about sacrifice and sentience, this speculative enterprise, accompanied by Carter's moody illustrations, offers melancholic refinement to an otherwise straightforward adventure. Noah reads as white; Winona has copper skin. Ages 10–up. *Author's agent: Alec Shane, Writers House. (June)*

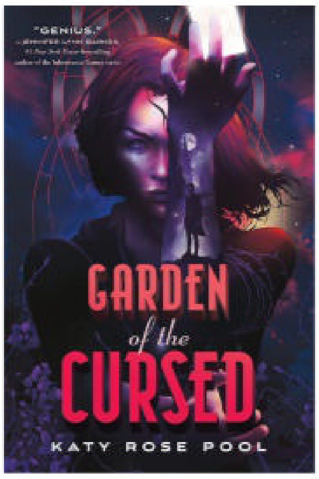
★ Sing Me to Sleep

Gabi Burton. Bloomsbury, $19.99 (432p) ISBN 978-1-5476-1037-2

Seventeen-year-old Saoirse Sorkova is a beautiful, brown-skinned siren, believed extinct in the fae-ruled Kingdom of Keirdre. As a siren, she can feel and taste emotions as well as ensnare men's minds, and she also grapples with an insatiable need to kill. Saoirse hides her lineage and lives in secret among Keirdre's fae, witch, and human denizens, only sharing her powers with her multi-species family. To make ends meet and protect her non-fae younger sister Rain from the cruel monarchy, Saoirse trains as a soldier in the kingdom's military school by day, and by night performs covert, clandestine assassinations for an anonymous employer. When Rain receives a blackmail letter threatening to reveal her heritage, Saoirse vows to uncover the blackmailer using her new position as a guard for the otherworldly fae Prince Hayes. But a growing conspiracy soon reveals that her past assassinations might be connected, putting everything she's worked so hard for at risk. Via Saoirse's simultaneously ruthless and tender first-person POV, Burton spins an unforgettable debut that boasts impeccable characterizations and fresh takes on well-trod tropes that promise an amorous adventure centering a devoted, rag-tag family, stirring mythos, and sweetly budding romance. Ages 13–up. *Agent: Naomi Davis, BookEnds Literary. (June)*

★ Garden of the Cursed (Garden of the Cursed #1)

Katy Rose Pool. Holt, $19.99 (352p) ISBN 978-1-250-84666-2



Pool (the Age of Darkness trilogy) fuses fantasy, mystery, and romance in this transfixing duology opener set in Caraza City, where spellcraft knowledge is regulated by the politically powerful Five Families. Because of her mother's station as the right hand of a Five Families patriarch, Marlow Briggs leads a privileged life learning spellcraft alongside the families' young elites. After her mother vanishes, Marlow, now 17, dwells in the gang-run Marshes and works as a cursebreaker, seeking out and destroying the sources of hexes. When Five Families scion Adrius Falcrest, 18, asks Marlow for help with breaking a dangerous curse, she hesitates. Though Adrius and Marlow were once friends bordering on more, he publicly rebuffed her, breaking Marlow's heart. But regaining access to the Five Families would allow Marlow to investigate her mother's disappearance. Posing as Adrius's girlfriend to keep their agreement—and her snooping—discreet, Marlow swallows her pride and dives back in to the affluent world that once rejected her. High-stakes action and bureaucratic intrigue abound, but it's Marlow and Adrius's charged relationship that keep tensions elevated, continuously knocking confident Marlow off-kilter. Sumptuous worldbuilding and fully realized, intersectionally diverse characters further enhance this enticing tale. Ages 14–up. *Agents: Alexandra Machinist and Hillary Jacobson, ICM Partners. (June)*

Gloria Buenrostro Is Not My Girlfriend

Brandon Hoàng. Farrar, Straus and Giroux, $19.99 (304p) ISBN 978-0-374-38857-7

Gary Võ and his best friend Preston Trương, both 16 and Vietnamese American, often feel invisible in their majority-white school. But when popular kid Jordan Tellender, who reads as white, offers Gary the chance to be initiated into his exclusive Rooster Society, things begin looking up for the two friends. All Gary needs to do is befriend beautiful classmate Gloria Buenrostro—and steal and deliver to Jordan one of Gloria's personal items, "worthy enough to be deemed a token" of Gary's loyalty to Jordan and his crew. After a brief misunderstanding, Gary finds himself tandem biking across town with Latinx-cued Gloria, making deliveries for her family's tailor and tamales business. Pressure from Jordan reminds Gary of their goal, but as Gary and Gloria grow closer, they open up about their lives in a way they never have with their friends or families, causing Gary to reconsider whether popularity is worth everything he could lose. Their easygoing relationship adds levity to thought-provoking themes of wealth privilege, stereotyping, and insecurity. In this sweetly rendered debut, Hoàng employs well-paced plot points and dynamic character development that coalesce into an amicable tale. Ages 14–up. *Agent: Alyssa Jennette, Stonesong Literary. (June)*

Wings of Time and Fate

Isla Wynter. Peryton, $12.99 paper (312p) ISBN 978-1-9161515-3-6

With the help of her magical time-bending abilities, young adult Eona has made a name for herself as an acrobat traveling throughout the Kingdom of Fer and performing with the theatrical Ghorres family. But since magic has been strictly controlled by the king, her power also makes her a target. When Lassadar, the Royal Sorcerer, dispatches guards to kidnap her, Eona is offered a choice: become Lassadar's magical apprentice or risk being sentenced to death. Hoping to find a way out of her predicament, Eona agrees to Lassadar's tutelage. Eona's magical prowess grows exponentially via his harsh lessons, but as she delves further into the workings of the palace, she's forced to reckon with her inadvertent complicity in enforcing an oppressive regime. Eona's acquisition of a peryton, a mythical deer-like creature with wings, adds buoyant levity to her situation. Excerpts from fictional books about the Kingdom of Fer's history begin each chapter, providing slim context for subsequent happenings; the underdeveloped worldbuilding lends to a disjointed narrative and undermines the intriguing premise. Even so, Wynter imbues Eona's far-reaching travels with gripping tension that propels this fantastical adventure. Ages 14–up. *(Self-published)*

You're Not Supposed to Die Tonight

Kalynn Bayron. Bloomsbury, $19.99 (240p) ISBN 978-1-5476-1154-6

Frightening thrills and bloody kills abound in this meta twist on classic horror films from Bayron (*This Wicked Fate*). Black teenage lesbian Charity has spent the last few summers as a counselor at Camp Mirror Lake, a terror-simulation experience in which guests pay to be scared by participating in recreations of scenes from the 1980s cult classic *The Curse of Camp Mirror Lake*. After two years playing insignificant characters, Charity can't wait to embody the coveted Final Girl in the camp's send-off game. But when her fellow counselors start disappearing and menacing figures are spotted lurking around the lake, the game begins to feel way too real. Charity, her girlfriend Bezi, and the rest of her coworkers find themselves fighting for their lives over the course of one horrifying night that offers no promise of survival. Rushed exposition and a racially diverse but little utilized supporting cast dampen the novel's clever, audience-winking start and ambitious trope subversions. Nevertheless, Bayron's abundant use of familiar twists and turns draw on the genre's classic predecessors to craft a gory and darkly funny read that is sure to satisfy slasher fans. Ages 14–up. *Agent: Jamie Vankirk, Rainbow Nerds Literary. (June)*

KALYNN BAYRON
NEW YORK TIMES BESTSELLING AUTHOR OF CINDERELLA IS DEAD
YOU'RE NOT SUPPOSED TO DIE TONIGHT
BLOOMSBURY

Comics

★ Family Style: Memories of an American from Vietnam

Thien Pham. First Second, $25.99 (240p) ISBN 978-1-250-80971-1; $17.99 paper ISBN 978-1-2508-0972-8

Pham employs food as a vehicle to chronicle his and his family's treacherous experience as Vietnamese refugees in this arresting graphic novel memoir, a debut. In the book's first chapter, a bespectacled adult Pham recalls "my very first memory... from when I was five." A spread rendered in inky line and muted color washes depicts an overcrowded boat carrying Vietnamese evacuees suffering from thirst, hunger, and fear. When their vessel is beset by pirates, Pham's parents instruct him to close his eyes; pages of void-like darkness interspersed by red-toned scenes of the pirates' violent acts follow as Pham's parents assure him that they're "right here. It will be okay." Upon surviving the siege, Pham is given a rice ball, the last of the family's food: "To this day," Pham writes, "I can still taste that rice ball." Subsequent chapters recount the family's travels from Songkhla refugee camp to San Jose, Calif. Pham reflects the push-pull conflict of assimilation and cultural loss as explored through food in digitally illustrated panels portraying visual feasts and expressive emotion, making for a vivid and insightful telling that offers joy and hope amid the terror. Ages 14–up. *(June)*

Monstrous: A Transracial Adoption Story

Sarah Myer. First Second, $25.99 (272p) ISBN 978-1-250-26879-2; $17.99 paper ISBN 978-1-2502-6880-8

Transracial adoptee and comics artist Myer (*Create a Costume!*) details their childhood navigating bullying and self-image issues in the 1980s and '90s in this vulnerable graphic memoir. Myer and their older sister Lizzy, who are South Korean and have different biological parents, were adopted at birth and raised in rural Maryland by the Myers, a white-cued farm couple. Though Lizzy got along well with her classmates, Myer often felt excluded from activities because of their intense interest in Teenage Mutant Ninja Turtles and mermaids, resulting in emotional outbursts that further separated them from their peers. Their love of drawing, however, provided nominal acceptance. "Even if... people didn't like me, they seemed to like my art," Myer writes. But continued bullying rooted in gender and race caused Myer to "internalize my emotions... with monstrous results." Even so, Myer's passion for cosplay, art, and animation provided an outlet to explore their gender, sexuality, and future goals. Myer's cinematic style makes for a dynamic approach; complexly layered panels, highly saturated hues, and clear, linear sequencing offer accessible windows into Myer's emotions. Those wrestling with feelings of disconnect from their communities will find validation in this confessional read. Ages 14–up. *(June)*

Nonfiction

Moving the Millers' Minnie Moore Mine Mansion

Dave Eggers, illus. by Júlia Sardà. Candlewick, $19.99 (56p) ISBN 978-1-5362-1588-5

In an alliterative account of a late-19th-century event, Idaho workers relocate a Victorian-style mansion, rolling it four miles on logs while its inhabitants live their lives uninterrupted. Eggers (*We Became Jaguars*) sets the stage with exuberant editorializing ("Like all of the best stories, this takes place in Idaho"), detailing how a dog's finding silver in Idaho led to the establishment of the Minnie Moore Mine, later bought by Henry Miller of England ("We can assume that the mine was then known as Miller's Minnie Moore Mine"). Bringing "a bit of Old World civility to the Old West," Miller then built his wife, Annie, a house—the Millers' Minnie Moore Mine Mansion. After Miller died and Annie lost her fortune, the town would not allow her to raise pigs, leading to the move. Working digitally in shades of charcoal, orange, and sienna, Sardà (*The Queen in the Cave*) captures a stark, angular landscape alongside stylized individuals whose skin reflects the white of the page. Without contextualizing colonial settlement, this moniker-centric celebration of a locale's personalities and projects is at its best when explaining the move's logistical details. Ages 4–8. *(June)* ■

APRIL 24, 2023

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Getting Your Book—and Yourself—Out There

It can feel challenging to organize a book event, but it's worth it

BY SASSAFRAS LOWREY

After several years of only being able to do virtual events because of the pandemic, many authors are starting to plan book releases and readings in person again. Release events and other

> One of the best ways to make sure that people come to your reading is to collaborate with other authors in your area or your tour locations.

readings are a great way to build excitement for your book and increase sales.

In-person events are also a wonderful opportunity to build relationships with fans of your books and get or keep them invested in your work. But can indie authors really do book events?

The answer is, yes! Although many people associate book tours with traditionally published authors, in-person events are something that indie authors can organize for themselves. You might be surprised to know that, even for traditionally published authors, organizing a book event often falls on them.

As an author who is both traditionally published and has indie-released books, I have never let self-publishing a book mean that it can't have a book release. Over the past 15 years, I have organized book tours across the United States and Canada with my traditionally published and self-published books, as well as a tour across Europe with my first indie-published novel.

Building relationships with venues

The key to organizing successful book events in your city or while traveling is building connections and relationships with other people in the book world. Literary friendships and collaborations with other writers are a great way to learn about bookstores and other venues that might be interested in hosting a reading or book release.

Although historically self-published authors had some difficulty getting their books into bookstores, that's not universally the case, and booksellers are becoming more welcoming to stocking self-published authors. Personally, I haven't found it more difficult to get stores to shelve my self-published titles than my books published through small traditional publishers.

When you go to a bookstore, and especially if you attend any literary events, introduce yourself to the staff. If you notice the store has your book in stock, introduce yourself to the store manager, owner, or other staff working that day.

Libraries and bookstores are the obvious choice for where to go on a book tour, but these aren't the only venues that host authors and book release events. Cafes, gift shops and other stores that stock books or are related to the theme of your book are all great options for book release or event venues.

Financing book events

In most cases, if you're hosting a book reading at a bookstore, you will not have to pay anything, as the event will be in collaboration with them. However, bookstores might ask you to supply them with books that they will sell on consignment if they don't have large numbers of your book in stock.

Some other venues like restaurants and some community centers may charge space rental fees and will allow you to charge a door fee and sell books yourself. Don't be afraid to check with multiple venues to find the best deal.

Book tours that involve traveling have a larger financial component: you'll need to finance transportation, hotels, and other associated costs. If you want to go on tour with your book, you may be able to coordinate paid gigs. I've had great success with getting paid events as a visiting artist with colleges and universities, which often have budgets for such events.

Libraries also frequently support visiting authors, as do some book clubs. There may also be artist grants available to you that can help cover costs. When it comes to financing, try to get creative with targeting your niche audience. For example, if you've written a book about a certain theme, consider trying to collaborate with a community organization that is focused on that topic.

Finding an audience

One of the big challenges with putting together any kind of in-person release event or book tour is making sure that you can fill the venue with audience members. This is both for your own self-esteem and to show the venue that investing in organizing an event with you is worthwhile.

One of the best ways to make sure that people come to your reading is to collaborate with other authors in your area or your tour locations. Use your network of other authors you're connected with on social media or have met through writing events and conferences to find others who might want to read with you. It can feel intimidating to ask someone to be part of your event, but it's a normal part of literary life. Just think of how flattered you would be to be asked to read. The worst that can happen is they will say no because they have another booking or otherwise aren't available.

Getting the word out

Once you've set a venue and secured other authors to read with you it's time to start promoting your event. It's likely that your chosen venue will have a mailing list or calendar of events where your event can be included. But it's important not to rely on their mailing list to get people to attend.

Create promotional materials to share on social media, and ask any other authors involved in the event to share information about it with their followers. If you have a mailing list, send information about the reading to your followers. You can also print out physical flyers to drum up attention.

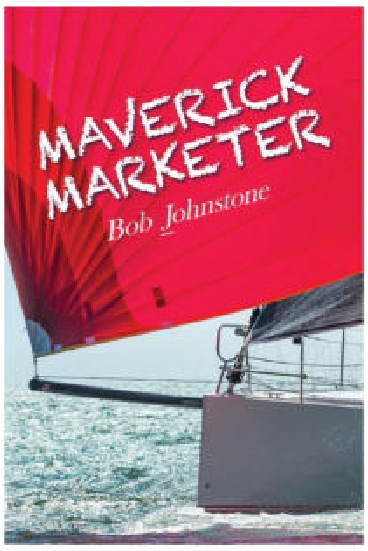
Organizing book releases, tours, and other in-person events can be a lot of work, but they are also useful and rewarding. There's nothing like meeting readers in person and hearing how your work has resonated with them. ■

Sassafras Lowrey writes fiction and nonfiction and was the recipient of the 2013 Lambda Literary Award for emerging LGBTQ writers.

Q&A SPONSORED

BookLife Talks with Bob Johnstone

After successful careers in marketing and sailing, Johnstone turned his attention to writing a memoir that draws on both. *Maverick Marketer*, out now, interweaves the two surprisingly similar fields in this account of finding your passion and doing what you love.



What spurred you to pick up a pen and write your memoir?
Sailing friends insisted that I write my story and recount the creation of more than 50 sailboat and powerboat designs for J Boats and MJM Yachts. This was also a chance to relate some family history for generations to come and to create a marketing text for others who may want to pursue their dreams.

The book recounts your life but also explores your family's sailing history, including a potential piracy connection. What kind of research did you do for the book?
Not much. Some of those fun family myths were simply passed down. Others, like my wife Mary's great-grandfather A.R. Chisolm's exploits during the Fort Sumter dial-up to the Civil War and the First Battle of Bull Run, were sourced from existing historical texts and documents.

Do you think there's a connection between your love of sailing and your successful career in marketing?
Yes, that's covered in the foreword. The mental process of dealing with all the variables of wind and current, anticipating the actions of competitors, and being able to assign probabilities to a myriad of outcomes in a sailboat race closely resembles the decision tree exercise at Harvard Business School. It teaches us how to make decisions in life without knowing all the facts in order to "win the race."

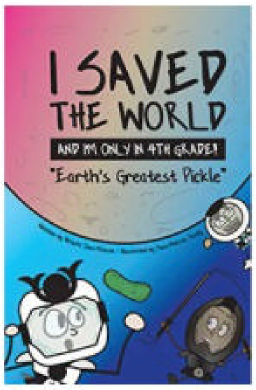
For more, visit **booklife.com/johnstone**

Indie Spotlight

In this month's thematic roundup of BookLife titles, we feature humor and satire.

Want to see your book featured? Check out the Indie Spotlight calendar at booklife.com/indiespotlight.

CHILDREN'S BOOKS

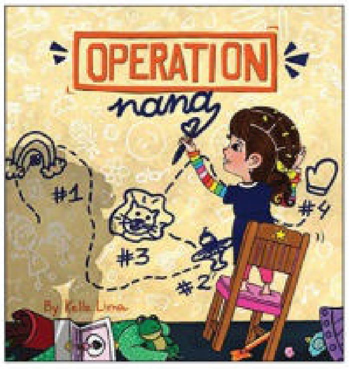


I Saved the World and I'm Only in 4th Grade

Hiroshi Sosa-Nakata

ISBN 978-1-73323-690-4

Author statement: "This book contains an epic adventure that places three fourth graders in extreme danger! Hiro, Bryan, and Zahra, our favorite Senshi Warriors, are once again saving the galaxy. This time however, they've got help from The Teacher's Pet (and an entire backpack full of enhanced school supplies). Don't miss their silly adventures, missteps, or weekly class project! Who knew fourth grade could be so challenging? I started writing as a way to share culture and promote diversity in a fun and engaging way. I've found my message and offbeat sense of humor have resonated well with others and that laughter truly is the best medicine."

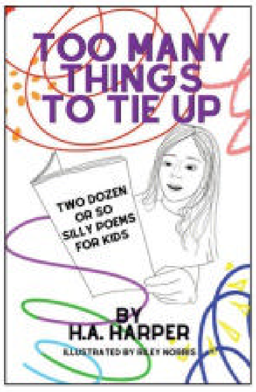


Operation Nana

Kelle Lima

ASIN B0B8YPYH8S

Author statement: "Juju has a very special mission. She's determined to make Miss Rose her nana even though they aren't connected by blood. This little girl is ready to show the world that to be part of a family, we only need to be connected by our hearts. This is a humorous and perfect read for those who feel they have someone around them who is 'just like family.' Through the eyes of a naïve little girl and her fun-loving demeanor, this book shows that we can love people from the bottom of our hearts even though we are all different!


TOO MANY THINGS TO TIE UP
TWO DOZEN OR SO SILLY POEMS FOR KIDS
BY H.A. HARPER

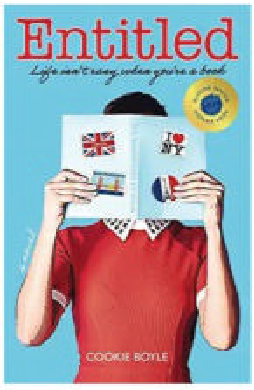
Too Many Things to Tie Up

H.A. Harper

ASIN B0B8BPKFN2

Author statement: "*Too Many Things to Tie Up* is a compilation of silly poems for kids, written by a kid. The whole summer before my ninth birthday, I sat at my computer and started to write silly poems. When my dad promised me that he would get an illustrator for my poems if they were good enough, I started to write even more."

NOVELS

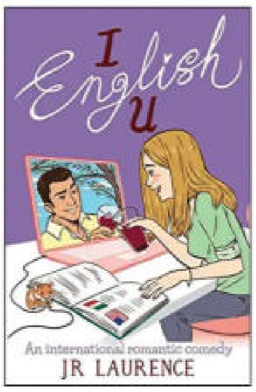


Entitled: Life Isn't Easy When You're a Book

Cookie Boyle

ISBN 978-1-77735-340-7

Author statement: "*Entitled* follows the extraordinary adventures of an extraordinary book. As it is read, misplaced, loaned, and abandoned, our book, like its readers, discovers love and heartbreak, loneliness and friendship, and ultimately becomes the author of its own journey. I wrote *Entitled* to provide a unique perspective on objects readers love, namely our books. I had read about one bookstore north of San Francisco that encouraged readers to share books they loved by leaving them on a park bench, on a bus, or in a coffee shop, with a note inside saying: 'I loved this book, I hope you do too.' "

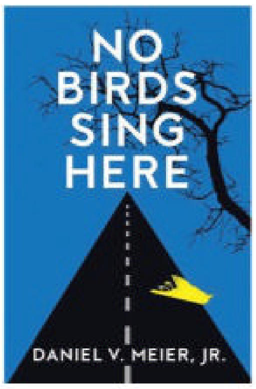


I English U

J.R. Laurence

ASIN B09Q88BVJS

Author statement: "Serena Young travels the world daily, teaching English online from her living room table. But when the laptop is off, her universe shrinks to her bare-bones apartment. Her dating life's a void, work barely pays the rent, and her hamster just wrecked her car. Surely a better life exists somewhere on the other side of the webcam. Then Alessandro, a scrumptious olive oil heir, signs up for online lessons, which soon extend into virtual walks under a southern Italian moon. Should Serena toss caution—and her life savings and possibly her job—to the wind and fly into his arms? Not if a Prada-clad vineyard heiress, an annoying geek neighbor, and her oddball students around the world can help it, in this intercontinental romantic misadventure of extra-virgin proportions."



No Birds Sing Here

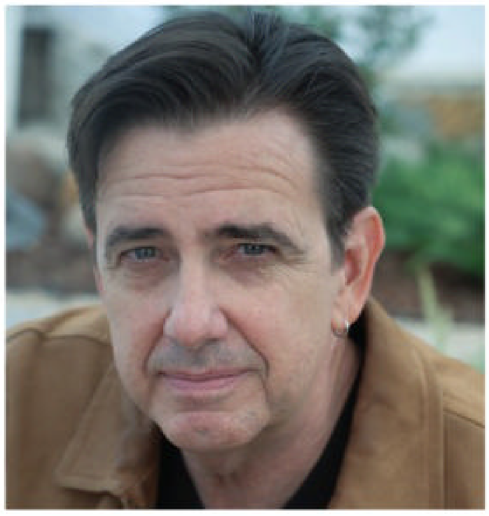
Daniel V. Meier Jr.

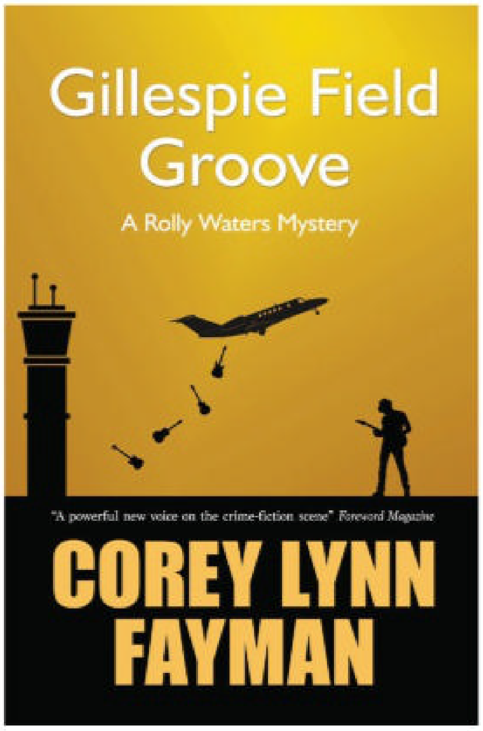
ISBN 978-1-945448-95-9

Author statement: "*No Birds Sing Here* is a multilayered novel about a postmodernist America, in which the characters confront a world of distorted intellectualism and overt incompetence. The 'artistic life' is not something everyone understands. Many people

BookLife Talks with Corey Lynn Fayman

Gillespie Field Groove, the fifth book in the Rolly Waters Mystery series, follows Rolly Waters, a guitar-playing private detective on the hunt for a lost Hendrix guitar. BookLife Reviews gave it an Editor's Pick, writing, "Lovers of a good mystery story and music will enjoy this book, which is as musically educational as it is thrilling."




Gillespie Field Groove
A Rolly Waters Mystery
"A powerful new voice on the crime-fiction scene" Foreword Magazine
COREY LYNN FAYMAN

What inspired the character of Rolly Waters?
I was a musician for many years, playing at clubs and other venues in Southern California. After that, I ended up in the tech business, working for an infamous internet startup called mp3.com. The company lost the largest copyright lawsuit in U.S. history. After that, it was taken over by a major corporation. The culture became more corporate too, and my job was less interesting. I needed something creative to keep me going. I was a big mystery fan, especially of Ross Macdonald's Archer novels set in Southern California. The idea of a guitar-playing private detective had been bouncing around in my head, so I started using lunch breaks to sketch out ideas for a novel. That led to the first Rolly Waters mystery, *Black's Beach Shuffle*, which mashed together my time in the music business with my experiences in the startup world. Write what you know!

Setting is a big part of the series. How do you incorporate real-life San Diego into the books?
San Diego is a critical part of the series. It's practically a secondary character. I'm a native San Diegan and decided from day one that I would set the series here. Each book "travels" to a different part of the county for its setting. I wanted to highlight aspects of the city tourists never see.

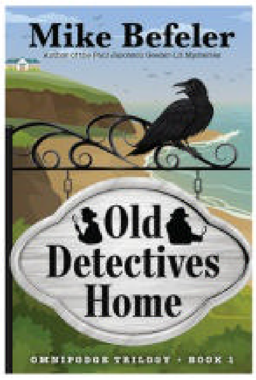
What do you think a good mystery has to have?
Intrigue is essential, arousing the curiosity of the reader. That's a mystery's first job. Each chapter needs to raise another question in the reader's mind. If you answer one question by the end of a chapter, that answer needs to raise a new question. That's the mechanism. But you don't want the reading of the book to feel mechanical. Mysteries are not character studies. I try to give my characters as much life and color as I can while keeping those mechanics in place. I like adding dashes of character-based humor as well. Rolly is a cozy hero in a noir world. The tension between those two elements is key to the series.

How do you imagine readers at this moment will connect to *Gillespie Field Groove*?
The book starts in 1969 outside a Jimi Hendrix concert at the then San Diego Sports Arena, with the idea that some of the people who meet there will be involved in the search for a "lost" Hendrix guitar set in our time. I did not realize when I started writing that the plot would be thematically related to the #MeToo movement. There have always been strong and compelling female characters in the Rolly Waters books, but this book seems to have struck a particularly strong chord, if you will, among female readers. A friend of mine said she cried at the end, which is not something I'd expected, but on further reflection I started to understand how the ending might provide a sense of relief. Justice is served in a unique and empowering way.

Can readers expect another book in the series?
I'm shuffling around a few ideas for Rolly Waters, but my next book will be a departure from the series. It's a historical mystery set in the affluent seaside resort of La Jolla, Calif., in the 1950s. A rookie cop seeks to restore his family's good name after his father's suicide, but his high-minded principles are put to the test when the search for a stolen suitcase implicates the rich and famous guests of the Hotel del Charro, including Raymond Chandler, J. Edgar Hoover, and Zsa Zsa Gabor.

For more, visit **booklife.com/fayman**

laugh at those who pursue it. In *No Birds Sing Here*, I wanted to show the real-life struggle of two young people trying to achieve their literary goals in an increasingly hostile world and their ultimate failure."



Old Detectives Home

Mike Befeler

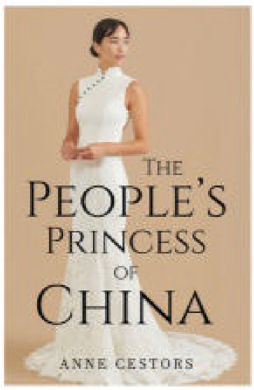
ISBN 978-1-64599-343-8

Author statement: "Imagine a retirement home populated with residents such as an aging Hercule Poirot and a dementia-suffering Sherlock Holmes and run by a staff that includes Art Doyle, Dash Hammett, and Dot Sayers. In this lighthearted spoof of the mystery genre, every character is either a namesake of a real person from the mystery writing world or a character from a mystery novel. On anything but a dark and stormy night, a dead body is found. The staff managers find themselves unable to control the unruly old detectives. Mix in clues and red herrings galore as the cast of suspects investigate each other to figure out who done it."

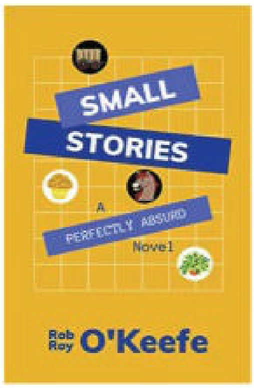
The People's Princess of China

Anne Cestors

ASIN B097FC2YC3



Author statement: "*The People's Princess of China* is an innovative 'movie-in-a-book' in which a beautiful rookie journalist from the fictitious *China Daily News* plans to cover Prince Harry's royal wedding to the stunning Meghan Markle. By way of an appalling series of events, the assistant editor at the *China Daily News* has misheard the word 'royal,' and accidentally sends her beautiful rookie journalist (in the company of three seasoned photographers, none of whom speak a word of English) to Boyle in County Roscommon, Ireland, where, through an equally appalling series of unrelated events, Irish-American heartthrob Harry O'Toole has been duped into a shotgun wedding."

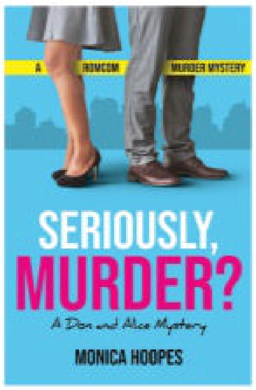


Small Stories: A Perfectly Absurd Novel

Robert O'Keefe

ASIN B0B2VSLFCB

Author statement: "Duncan and Maya Small have just relocated to a new town. Again. And almost immediately, Duncan is ready to move on, thanks to a power-obsessed local official who has it out for him. But Maya has ideas of her own. The Smalls soon discover nothing in their new town is as it seems, but one thing is certain—there's something funny going on. *Small Stories: A Perfectly Absurd Novel* is a comic tale about life, power, and the last Welcome Wagon, in a quirky little town that's decidedly off-the-wall, yet remarkably familiar. It's about power, secret societies, and bake sales. It's about Duncan Small's fixation on process and Maya Small's unforeseen celebrity. It's about new and unusual friends, who may turn out to be the best kind there are. The idea for my book came from living among the single most absurd species on the planet—human beings."

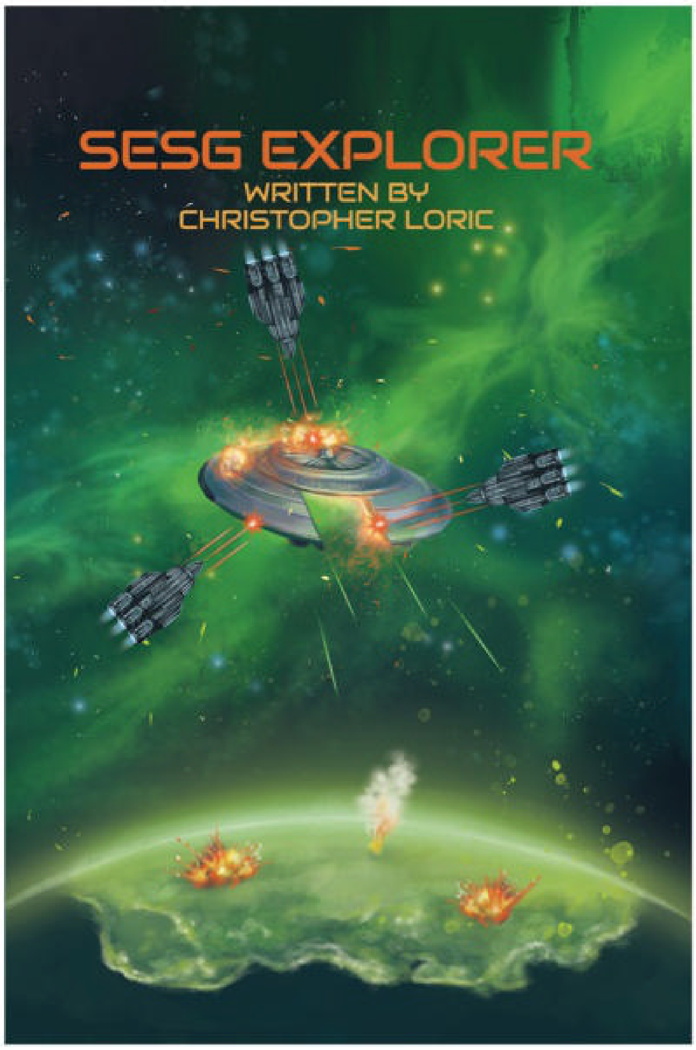


Seriously, Murder?

Monica Hoopes

ASIN B0B98WKLVV

Author statement: "Alice and Don are recent law school grads, and they know what they're doing. Kind of. But when they're assigned to their first murder case, they might be in over their heads! And of course, they can't forget about their other crazy clients. Part romcom, part mystery, this R-rated whodunit is laugh-out-loud fun! I am a small-town lawyer with an MFA



SESG Explorer
by
Christopher Loric

The United States has sent a fleet of ships on a diplomatic mission to a planet they received a message from, and discover just how dangerous the galaxy truly is.

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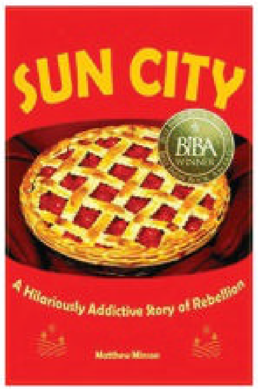
in creative writing, and I've drawn inspiration from my own practice to write this book. Small-town law is both ridiculous and frightening! I've dealt with everything from feuding neighbors and indecent exposure to first-degree murder. As writers, we are taught to write what we know. This is my town and these are my people (with a ton of creative license)!"

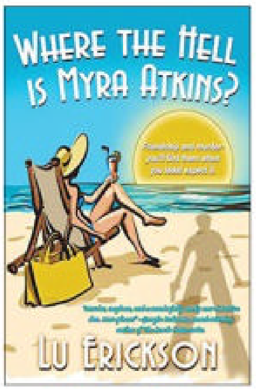


Sun City

Matthew Minson

ASIN B09S6TMT5H

Author statement: "When a group of eccentric, vibrant seniors in a master-planned community are compelled to oppose a corrupt corporation that owns their properties, a widowed old farmer, a genius salacious chef named Betty Crocker, a former CIA operative turned counterculture warrior, and a mob boss in witness protection decide to regain control of their community by making enough money to take over the big business entity. Complicating this titanic struggle between individual freedom and social control is a world populated by clog-dancing Wiccans, feral hogs, and a pesky DHS drone. In the end, however, they all wind up with something far more valuable than money: a sense of community and the ability to help the kids who have no idea what is happening."



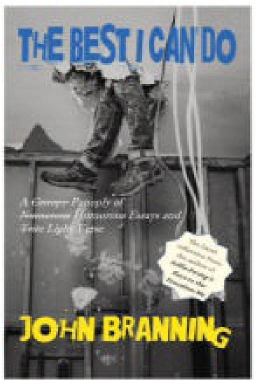
Where the Hell Is Myra Atkins?

Lu Erikson

ASIN B00RPK2DN0

Author statement: "When Myra Atkins, a life-hardened, aging vamp of a detective, goes missing, her secretary, proper English import Esther Humperstone, is panic-stricken. She enlists new hire Henry, an earnest yet slightly off-center 22-year-old, to help find her beloved boss. What Henry and Esther don't know is that while they're taking a crash course in private detecting, Myra, caught up in a midlife meltdown, has actually escaped to Maui with smooth-talker Ray Garnetti for a little sun and romance—and a lot of vodka martinis. The stakes are raised when Gordon Winston, a prominent Sacramento businessman, and the last person Myra saw before she disappeared, turns up dead. When I began writing this story, I wanted to celebrate friendship, and I wanted to do it with humor because I believe we can all use a breather from the ever-present negativity and cynicism that surrounds us these days."

NONFICTION

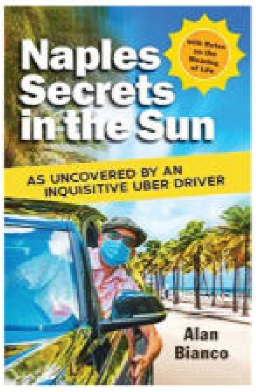


The Best I Can Do

John Branning

ASIN B0BH33FBXR

Author statement: "*The Best I Can Do* is chock-full of observations on topics including politics, marriage, dentists, yoga, food, the mysteries of the English language, and one horribly misguided explanation of bitcoin. *The Best I Can Do* is a 'greatest hits' compilation from more than 10 years of humor writing. My inspirations come from misinterpreting nearly everything I hear, and others misconstruing nearly everything I say."

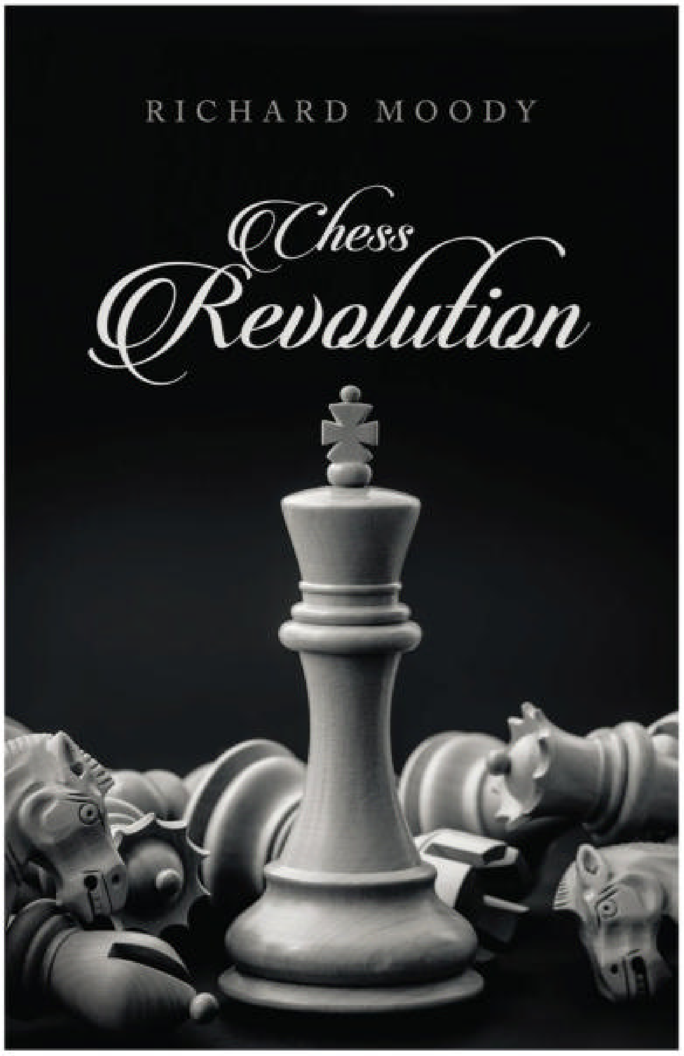

Naples Secrets in the Sun
AS UNCOVERED BY AN INQUISITIVE UBER DRIVER
Alan Bianco

Naples Secrets in the Sun

Alan Bianco

ASIN B0BP4N8P39

Author statement: "*Naples Secrets in the Sun* is a narrative nonfiction account of my escapades driving the highways and byways of Naples, Fla., as an Uber driver. While this book is ostensibly about Naples and Uber, it



Chess Revolution
by
Richard Moody

Chess Revolution looks at a wide range of chess strategies and introduces readers to the concept of Universal Positions and the Universal System.

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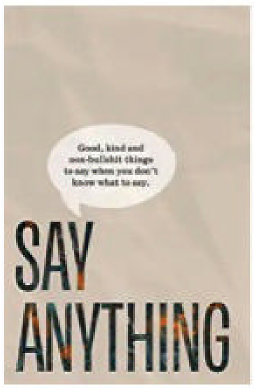
is really about people, history, and life in general. Scattered throughout the book are snippets of wisdom called 'Notes on the Meaning of Life.' These snippets provide related word definitions, famous quotes, or context-sensitive information on history, geography, social science, films, and Earth science. The book originated after I became an Uber driver at the onset of the Covid epidemic. I found that many of my passengers, as well as many of the stories they told me about Naples and about life, were fascinating!"


Good, kind and non-bullshit things to say when you don't know what to say.
SAY ANYTHING

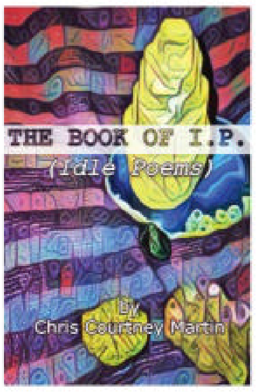
Say Anything: Good, Kind, and Non-bullshit Things to Say When You Don't Know What to Say

Fiona Jefferies

ISBN 978-0-645-62841-8

Author statement: "*Say Anything* is a refreshing and practical guide on what to say—and how to say it. The book covers domestic life, the workplace, friendships, grief and loss, pregnancy and babies, weight, aging, and many other scenarios. You'll also find advice on when to say nothing, when to listen more than you speak, and what not to say when someone is grieving or stressed. This book was written during Covid times when I felt I was all out of good words. I found myself retreating from conversations or avoiding engaging with others. I was afraid of causing pain, not saying the right thing or sounding like a complete muppet. I wrote this book firstly to help me. I'd have conversations, and later, I'd think, 'I wish I had a witty comeback or had said something more meaningful.' I wanted to improve the way I communicated and have better things to say, especially in tricky situations. If you're feeling the same way, this book is for you."

POETRY & SHORT STORIES

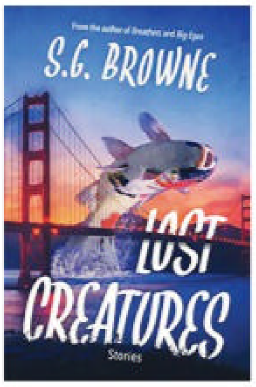


The Book of IP (Idle Poems)

Chris Courtney Martin

ASIN B0B148JKLM

Author statement: "This collection came about after a spontaneous kundalini emergence which caused me to rethink everything in my life, especially my career as a rising screenwriter and producer. The simultaneous disrespect for screenwriters and ravenous appropriation of other forms of writing, as reduced to IP, set off alarm bells. I used this collection as a call-out, call-in, and call to arms for anyone who cares about the written word as more than a property to 'flip' for entertainment industry cash."



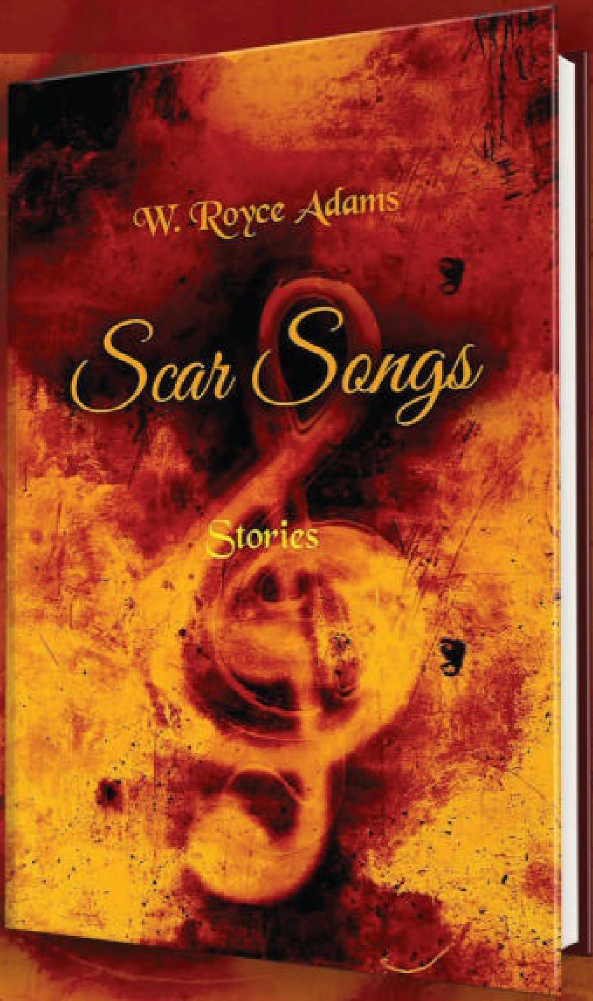
Lost Creatures

S.G. Browne

ISBN 978-1-7371590-0-1

Author statement: "*Lost Creatures* is a collection of 14 short stories of downtrodden luck poachers, lovelorn chemical elements, obsolete villains, disillusioned children, trademarked teenagers, outcast reindeer, victimized zombies, and time-traveling alcoholics—many of them lost and searching for answers. Some of them find what they're looking for, while one or two discover that childhood dreams can come true. The stories are a blend of dark comedy, social satire, fantasy, science fiction, and fabulism. I've always been drawn to humor and satire, and as my writing has developed over the years, I've gravitated toward writing dark comedy and social satire, but with a heart. A common thread in my stories has involved the search for meaning or purpose."

"Adams's stories are crisp, incisive, briskly told dispatches about living on in spite of it all. —BookLife Reviews"



ISBN (eBook): 979-8986488530
ISBN (Paperback): 979-8986488523

"Author W. Royce Adams writes the lives of his broken, haunted characters with spare but artful grace, uncovering their frailties with clear-eyed candor while acknowledging the ambiguities and contradictions of human nature. —IndieReader Book of the Month"

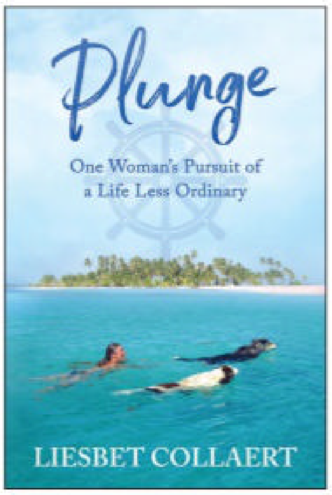
AVAILABLE AT
Bookstores everywhere
amazon BARNES&NOBLE INDIEBOUND

wroyceadams.com

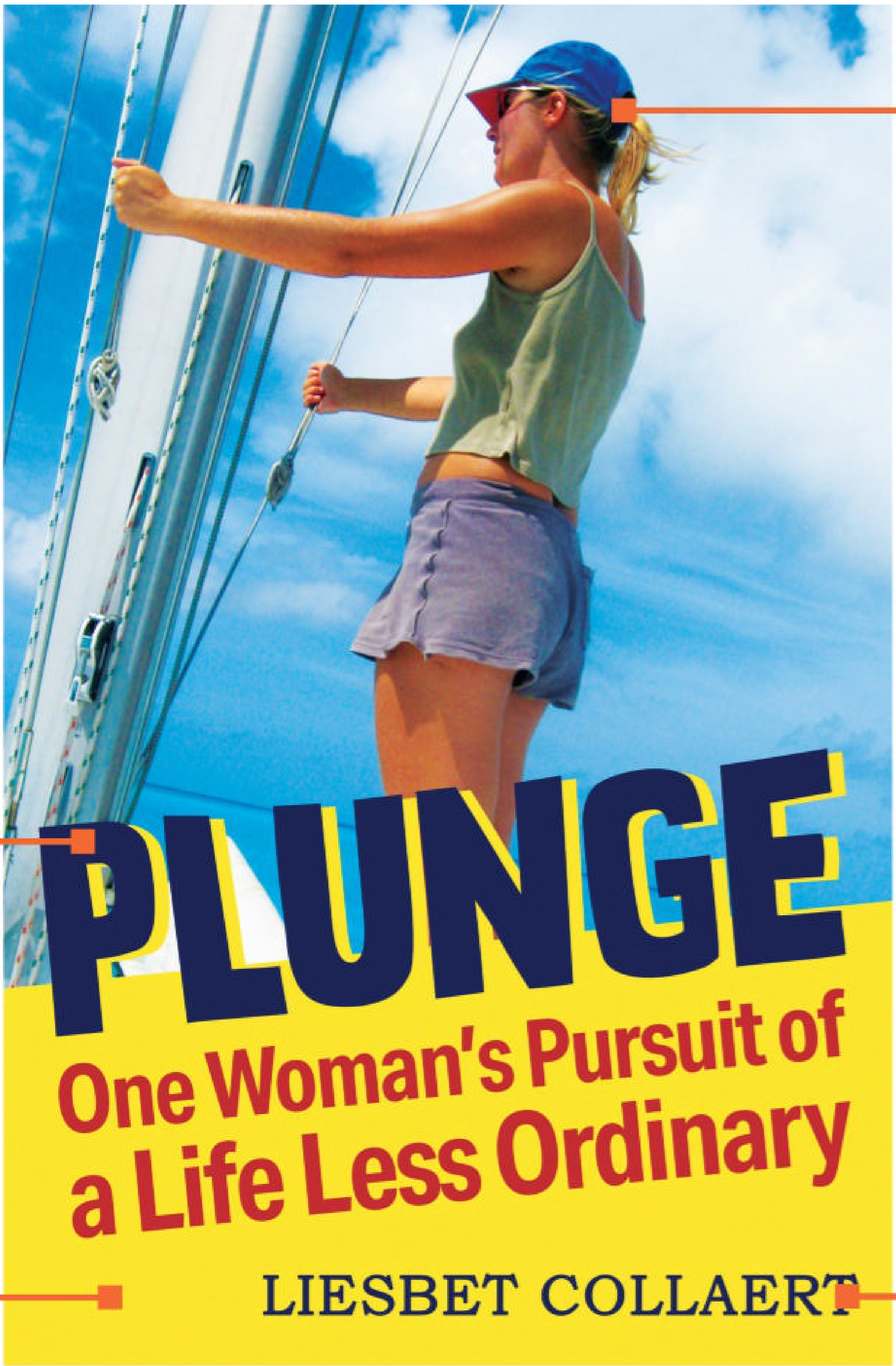
Cover Redesign

This month, Michelle Argyle at Melissa Williams Design reimagines the cover of *Plunge: One Woman's Pursuit of a Life Less Ordinary* by indie author Liesbet Collaert.

To submit a book for a free cover redesign, email us at booklifeeditor@booklife.com.


Plunge
One Woman's Pursuit of
a Life Less Ordinary
LIESBET COLLAERT

Original cover


PLUNGE
One Woman's Pursuit of
a Life Less Ordinary
LIESBET COLLAERT

I loved the tilted title on the original, so I kept that element while also using a more playful, larger font to stand out more.

I wanted a larger image of the author, so I chose a fun, tilted picture that not only showcases her sailing in her element but also plays with the tilted title.

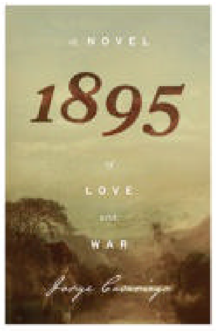
Using bold colors like yellow and red set this cover apart from the original.

Using a serif font for the author's name instead of a sans-serif font adds a touch of seriousness to this memoir.

New Titles from Self-Publishers

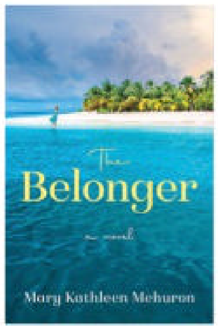
Booksellers, publishers, librarians, and agents are encouraged to look at the 91 self-published titles below. Each appears with a list of retailers that are selling the book and a description provided by its author. Some of these writers are waiting to be discovered; others have track records and followings and are doing it on their own. If you are a self-published author interested in listing titles in this section, please visit publishersweekly.com/pw-select for more information.

Fiction



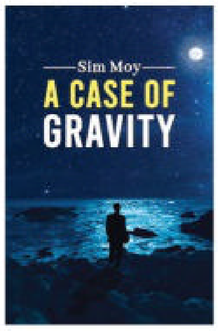
1895: A Novel of Love and War
Jorge Casariego. Jorge Casariego. $13.99 paper (326p), ISBN 979-89-87570-51-7; $6.99 e-book, ASIN B0BSCL9693
Amazon

This debut novel by a Cuban-born psychiatrist weaves a story of love and courage during the Cuban war of independence.



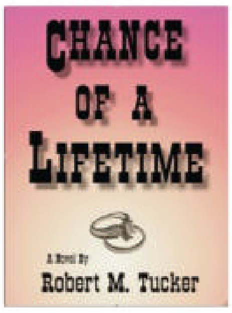
The Belonger: A Novel
Mary Kathleen Mehuron. SparkPress. $17.95 paper (272p), ISBN 978-1-68463-206-0; $9.49 e-book, ASIN B0B8H62DL4
Bookshop.org

Island innkeeper Holly Walker's life changes forever after she faces a monster hurricane stuck with player Lord Anthony Bascombe and wondering if she will ever see her family again.



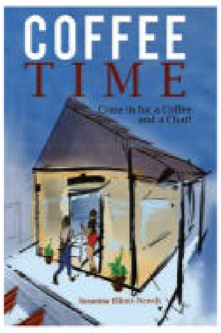
A Case of Gravity
Sim Moy. Austin Macauley Publishers. $20.95 paper (328p), ISBN 978-1-398-46708-8; $4.50 e-book, ISBN 978-1-398-46709-5
Amazon, BN.com

A hostage situation, an amateur sleuth, selected killings, multiple plot unravelings, subversion, and spies. The unlikely hero saves the day and finally gets the girl.



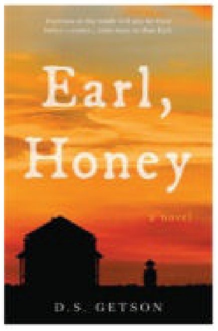
Chance of a Lifetime
Robert M. Tucker. Xlibris. $26.99 (476p), ISBN 978-1-4257-2531-0; $18.99 paper, ISBN 978-1-4257-2530-3
Amazon

This novel taps into the heart of a contemporary American family that reluctantly trades a comfortable suburban existence for life in a mountain wilderness.



Coffee Time
Susanna Elliott-Newth. Austin Macauley Publishers. $20.95 paper (326p), ISBN 978-1-398-46355-4; $4.50 e-book, ASIN B0BRL6MV4J
Amazon, BN.com

These 32 sagas and poems are accounts of true events crafted as narrative.



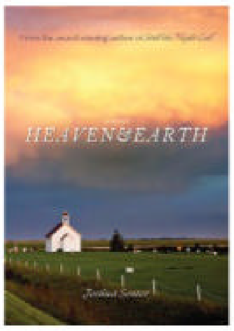
Earl, Honey
D.S. Getson. Troubador Publishing. $19.40 (343p), ISBN 978-1-80313-169-6; $13.80 paper, ISBN 978-1-80313-167-2
Troubador Publishing, Ingram, OverDrive

Everyone in the family will pay for their father's crimes—no one more than Earl.

WILD-WILLED WOMEN OF THE WEST
THE GOOD TIME GIRLS
K.T. BLAKEMORE

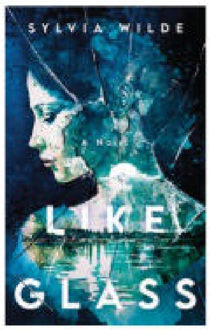
The Good Time Girls
K.T. Blakemore. Sycamore Creek Press. $18.95 paper (270p), ISBN 978-0-9905843-8-4; $4.99 e-book, ASIN B0BSVRG479
Amazon, BN.com, Ingram, Powell's

Two ex–dance hall girls take to the road to find an old enemy and kill him before he gets to them first in this novel of mishaps, blunders, con men, and the circling noose of the law.



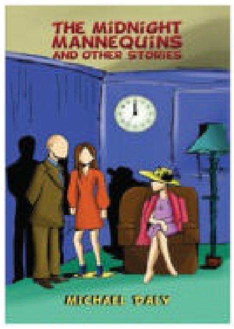
Heaven & Earth
Joshua Senter. Roubidoux Press. $34 (262p), ISBN 978-1-73758-562-6; $11.99 e-book, ISBN 978-1-73758-563-3
Amazon, BN.com, IndieBound, Ingram

Ruth must decide whether to stay married or walk away from her closeted, philandering preacher husband. There is a third option, but choosing it may destroy her very soul.



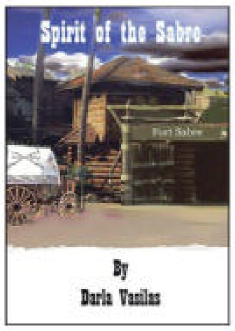
Like Glass
Sylvia Wilde. Left Field Publishers. $22.99 paper (396p), ISBN 979-83-7918-853-5; $9.99 e-book, ASIN B0BZN3WLPJ
Amazon

After religious trauma and chronic abandonment, Trey struggles to find love. While hope might falter, the human spirit often finds a way. But it might not look like what most expect.



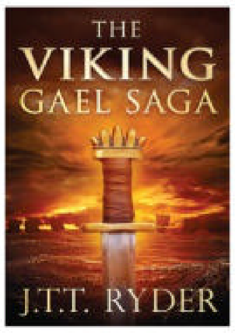
The Midnight Mannequins and Other Stories
Michael Daly. Austin Macauley Publishers. $23.95 (120p), ISBN 978-1-398-41040-4; $9.95 paper, ISBN 978-1-398-41039-8
Amazon, BN.com

From humble rural Irish landscapes to the elegance of Claridge's Hotel in London, the many characters in this diverse collection test the reader's emotions.



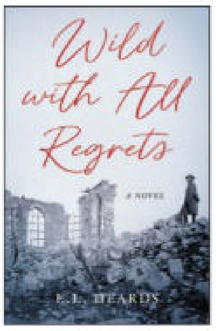
Spirit of the Sabre
Darla Vasilas. Xlibris. $17.99 paper (238p), ISBN 978-1-66981-784-0; $3.99 e-book, ISBN 978-1-66981-783-3
Amazon

A traveling peddler discovers a deserted fort. No men, no horses, no supplies. What could be the mystery behind their disappearance?



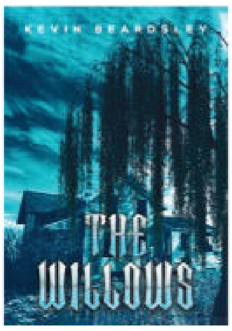
The Viking Gael Saga, Book 1
J.T.T. Ryder. Old World Heroism. $13.99 paper (157p), ISBN 978-82-692-7918-4; $3.99 e-book, ISBN 978-82-692-7919-1
Amazon, Apple iBooks, BN.com, Google Play, Kobo

Asgeir joins with Ulf's crew of Vikings and intends to get his revenge, but he strikes an unlikely friendship with the old Viking.



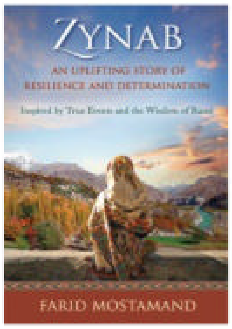
Wild with All Regrets
E.L. Deards. She Writes Press. $17.95 paper (288p), ISBN 978-1-64742-487-9; $9.95 e-book, ASIN B0B8H6H1P3
Bookshop.org

A decade after Lucas Connolly loses his best friend, Jamie, Lucas begins to see a specter who looks and acts exactly like his old friend, demanding answers about what happened to him.



The Willows
Kevin Beardsley. Austin Macauley Publishers. $13.95 paper (188p), ISBN 978-1-398-45898-7; $4.50 e-book, ISBN 978-1-398-45899-4
Amazon, BN.com

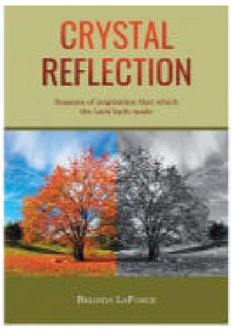
An early life of neglect doesn't deter Jack from being determined to be accepted and then later to realize his endeavors. The journey is fraught with failures, dangers, and disappointments.



Zynab: The Inspirational Journey of an Afghan Girl Guided by Rumi's Wisdom
Farid Mostamand. Farid Mostamand. $9.95 paper (384p), ISBN 979-83-86001-22-3; 99¢ e-book, ASIN B0BXK5MW5G
Amazon

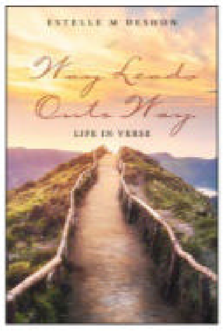
An ambitious Afghan girl seeks to fulfill her promise to her mother, fight for the right to education, and empower girls. Based on true events.

Poetry



Crystal Reflection: Seasons of Inspiration That Which the Lord Hath Made
Belinda LaForce. Page Publishing. $19.95 paper (128p), ISBN 978-1-6624-6229-0; $9.99 e-book, ASIN B09VHWDN2X
Amazon, BN.com, Bookshop.org, Kobo

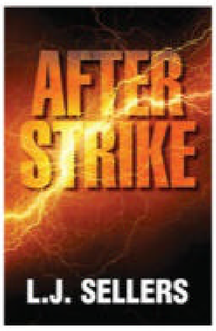
A collection of poems expressing the toll life takes on our spirit, the importance of honesty, and the hope given by a creator.



Way Leads onto Way: Life in Verse
Estelle M. Deshon. Xlibris. $10.96 paper (154p), ISBN 978-1-66988-749-2; $3.99 e-book, ISBN 978-1-66988-748-5
Amazon

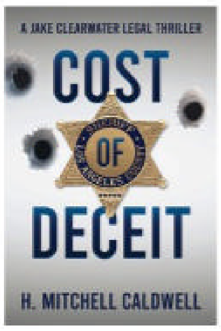
This poetic anthology is grounded in faith. It explores common human experiences of love, life, death, and hope. This may offer words of resilience and encouragement for readers.

Mystery/Thriller



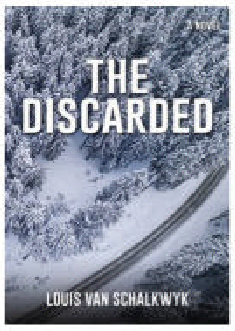
AfterStrike: An Unforgettable Thriller
L.J. Sellers. Spellbinder Press. $13.99 paper (276p), ISBN 978-1-73454-187-8; $3.99 e-book, ASIN B0BW3F2F8Y
Amazon, Apple iBooks, BN.com

Can a lightning strike survivor save herself from a predator she can't remember? Maybe—with a little help from undercover agent Dallas.



Cost of Deceit: A Jake Clearwater Legal Thriller
H. Mitchell Caldwell. Nine Innings Press. $29.95 (346p), ISBN 978-1-73751-234-9; $4.99 e-book, ISBN 978-1-73751-235-6
Ingram

An L.A. sheriff is on trial for killing his wife, but how does one try a murder without a body? Jake is brought in to lead the retrial, but can he overcome the many barriers and win a conviction?

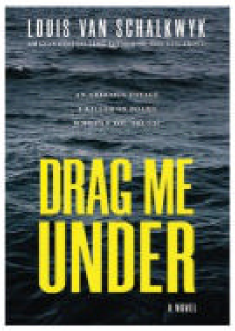


The Discarded

Louis van Schalkwyk. National Library of South Africa. $12.99 paper (314p), ISBN 978-0-620-96445-6; $2.99 e-book, ISBN 978-0-620-96446-3

Amazon

A man is wrongfully convicted of a heinous crime and is sent to a remote prison in the Arctic, where he must fight for his survival, sanity, and saving those he loves.



Drag Me Under

Louis van Schalkwyk. National Library of South Africa. $12.99 paper (368p), ISBN 978-0-639-73093-6; $2.99 e-book, ISBN 978-0-639-73094-3

Amazon

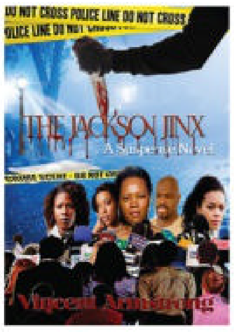
A voyage on board a research vessel goes horribly wrong after the crew rescues a mysterious woman floating in a tattered lifeboat.

Fool Me Twice

Spencer Lane Adams. Phucket Publishing. $14.39 paper (361p), ISBN 979-89-85396-41-6; $3.99 e-book, ASIN B09V19QM9S

Amazon

After 15 years in prison, Paddy is gambling his entire future on the perfect heist. He's planned for everything that can go wrong. But the one thing he hasn't planned for is Mac.

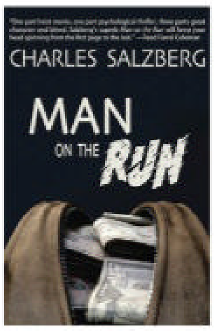


The Jackson Jinx

Vincent Armstrong. Magic Rainbow. $15.95 paper (254p), ISBN 978-1-73531-107-4; $6.95 e-book, ASIN B0BN72BH8G

Amazon, Apple iBooks, BN.com, Scribd

A sensational murder galvanizes the entire country as a troubled, beleaguered family becomes the center of this major nationwide media scandal.

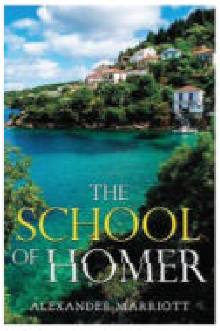


Man On the Run

Charles Salzberg. Down & Out Books. $19.95 paper, ISBN 978-1-64396-307-5

Amazon, BN.com, Bookshop.org

An intricate cat-and-mouse chase commences between Francis Hoyt, expert burglar and fugitive on the run, and Dakota Richards, tenacious true crime podcaster desperate for an exclusive.

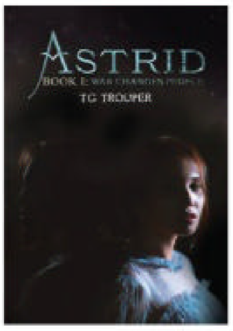


The School of Homer

Alexander Marriott. Vanguard Press. $18.99 paper (416p), ISBN 978-1-80016-420-8

Abebooks, Amazon, BN.com, Bookshop.org

A mystery unfolds on the Greek island of Ithaca, where a retired American detective helps his new Greek friend solve the unexpected murder of a British tourist.



War Changes People (Astrid #1)

T.G. Trouper. Austin Macauley Publishers. $18.95 paper (284p), ISBN 978-1-398-47072-9; $4.50 e-book, ISBN 978-1-398-47073-6

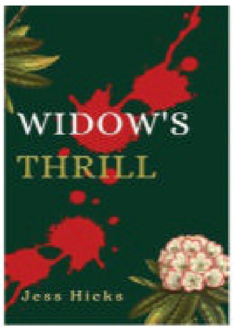
Amazon, BN.com

A belligerent country starts a war; a young actress gets caught up in it. She becomes an assassin driven by revenge and is willing to do whatever it takes.

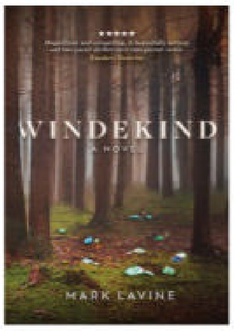
Widow's Thrill

Jess Hicks. Jess Hicks. $22.99 (227p), ISBN 979-83-7743-351-4; $13.99 paper, ISBN 979-83-7682-315-6

Amazon



Welcome to the mind of Ophelia Henry, a steadfastly single redhead from the South who inherits a new home and a few dead bodies.



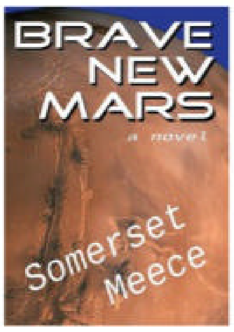
Windekind

Mark Lavine. Mark Lavine. $18.95 paper (320p), ISBN 979-82-18-11015-4; $7.95 e-book, ISBN 979-82-18-14593-4

Amazon, Ingram

Sam Thibeau moves to Vermont and uncovers a dangerous mystery. He enlists a detective's help to rescue his son from the Mexican cartel.

SF/Fantasy/Horror

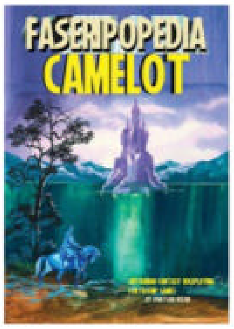


Brave New Mars: Commonwealth Against Corpocracy in 2084

Somerset Meece. KWest House. $25.02 (378p), ISBN 979-89-87065-51-8; $19.95 paper, ISBN 979-89-87065-50-1

BN.com, Ingram

In this drama set on the Martian frontier in 2084, a megalomaniac runs the planet for pure profit until hackers alter his supercomputer's operating system.



Camelot

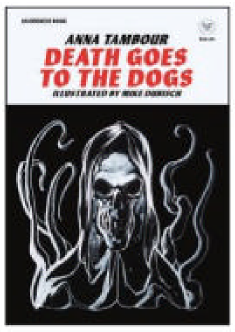
Jonathan Nolan. Jonathan Nolan. $69.99 paper (377p), ISBN 978-1-4477-8205-6; $19.95 e-book, ISBN 979-83-88280-83-1

Amazon, BN.com, Lulu

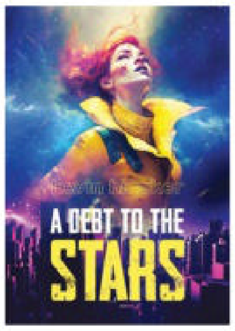
King Arthur, Camelot, and 100 detailed Knights of the Round Table in their fantasy world.

Death Goes to the Dogs

Anna Tambour, illus. by Mike Dubisch. Oddness. $29.99 paper (272p), ISBN 978-1-73221-244-2; $3.99 e-book, ISBN 978-1-

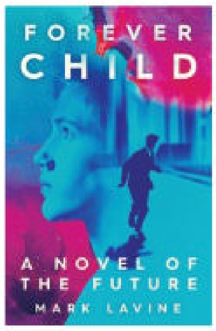

ANNA TAMBOUR
DEATH GOES TO THE DOGS

73221-245-9
BN.com
Tambour's scathing fables blend Life and Death with advertising mascots, nursery rhyme refugees, and angels that cheat at golf. With over 70 illustrations by Mike Dubisch.


A DEBT TO THE STARS

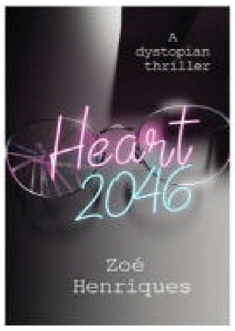
A Debt to the Stars

Kevin Hincker. Kevin Hincker. $16.97 paper (260p), ISBN 979-89-87630-12-9; $5.99 e-book, ISBN 979-89-87630-10-5
Amazon, Ingram
Diana Roark didn't begin life as the richest person in human history, but when aliens come for payment on Earth's existential debt, she risks everything to buy the planet free.


FOREVER CHILD
A NOVEL OF THE FUTURE
MARK LAVINE

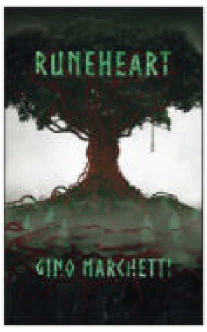
ForeverChild: A Novel of the Future

Mark Lavine. Mark Lavine. $14.95 paper (306p), ISBN 979-82-18-13094-7; $7.95 e-book, ISBN 979-82-18-15347-2
Amazon, Ingram
A novel set in a future when foreverchildren are threatened by Outsiders. Two youths on opposing sides accidentally trade places and become involved in this fierce struggle.


A dystopian thriller
Heart 2046
Zoé Henriques

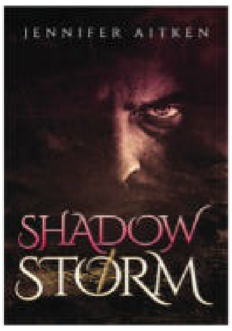
Heart 2046

Zoé Henriques. Zoé Henriques. $4.99 e-book, ASIN B0BYTF1GQZ
Amazon, Apple iBooks, Google Play, Kobo
A dystopian thriller set in a future where everyone lives their lives without human contact, closed inside individual apartment boxes.


RUNEHEART
GINO MARCHETTI

Runeheart

Gino C.R. Marchetti II. Gino R. Marchetti II. $29.99 (276p), ISBN 979-89-86892-73-3; $2.99 e-book, ASIN B0BPL83GF5
Amazon, BN.com
Rune, a werewolf seeking to atone for his past sins, vows to protect a family of war refugees, but can he guard them from the darkness lurking in his own heart?

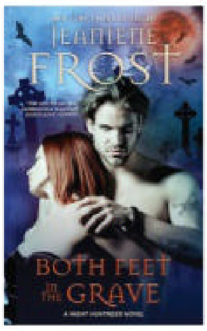

JENNIFER AITKEN
SHADOW STORM

Shadow Storm

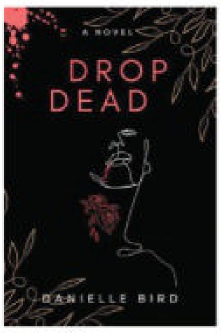
Jennifer Aitken. Jennifer Aitken. $8.49 paper (212p), ASIN B0BMSRJMVN; $3.99 e-book, ASIN B0BNGPZQJH
Amazon, BN.com, Kobo
Lucius Xavier is ripped from his life and thrown into a universal battle for control and power—exposing universal secrets that change his life forever.

Romance/Erotica

Both Feet in the Grave: A Night Huntress Novel

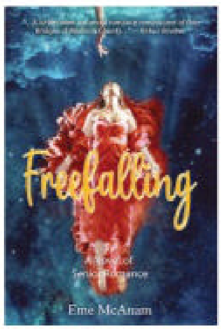

JEANIENE FROST
BOTH FEET IN THE GRAVE
A NIGHT HUNTRESS NOVEL

Jeaniene Frost. NYLA. $16.99 paper (346p), ISBN 979-83-7686-059-5; $4.99 e-book, ASIN B0BHLGVLMF
Amazon, Apple iBooks, BN.com, Kobo
From the *New York Times* bestselling author of the Night Huntress series comes a fresh, new perspective on the origin saga of Cat and Bones, this time in Bones's own words.


A NOVEL
DROP DEAD
DANIELLE BIRD

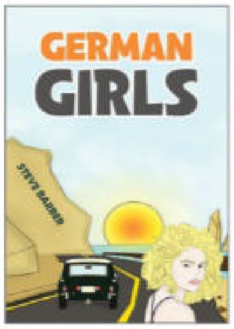
Drop Dead

Danielle Bird. Danielle Bird. $12.99 paper (389p), ISBN 979-83-68019-54-3; $2.99 e-book, ASIN B0BS4WR7DV
Amazon
When vampire hunter Ethan Jimenez and newly turned vampire Simon fall for each other, their lives get a lot more complicated. And bloody.


Freefalling
A Novel of Senior Romance
Eme McAnam

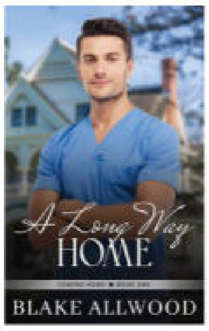
Freefalling: A Novel of Senior Romance

Eme McAnam. Autumn Stories Publishing. $17.99 paper (368p), ISBN 979-89-87121-70-2; $9.99 e-book, ISBN 979-89-87121-71-9
Amazon, BN.com, Ingram
Charlotte put her work first. Through unforeseen obstacles, including dementia, Charlotte discovers the golden years of her life hold happiness.


GERMAN GIRLS
STEVE BARBER

German Girls

Steve Barber. Austin Macauley Publishers. $12.95 paper (162p), ISBN 978-1-5289-7294-9; $4.50 e-book, ISBN 978-1-5289-9736-2
Amazon, BN.com
Paul is totally smitten with the lovely Heidi during a holiday encounter. Will their summer romance become something much more serious when he sets out to see if his love for her blossoms in her home city?

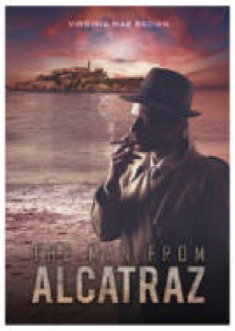

A Long Way HOME
BLAKE ALLWOOD

A Long Way Home: A Sweet Contemporary Gay Romance (Coming Home #1)

Blake Allwood. Blake Allwood Publishing. $19.99 paper (319p), ISBN 978-1-956727-39-5; $4.99 e-book, ASIN B0BMF8J5D1
Amazon, Ingram
This high-drama, sweet gay romance set in a small town launches the emotional Coming Home series. The men must conquer the past to save their love.

The Man from Alcatraz

Virginia Mae Brown. Austin Macauley Publishers. $26.95 (186p), ISBN 978-1-64979-537-3; $12.95 paper, ISBN 978-1-64ISBN 979-536-6



Amazon, BN.com

Rex Armati is shunned by his Mafia family and placed within the confines of Alcatraz. He escapes and attempts to forge a life in Wyoming.

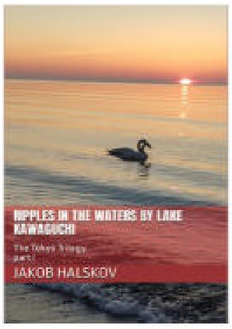
My Dream Lover

David Navarria. CCPC Organization. $12.95 paper (200p), ASIN B0BTQ7LC95

DavidNavarria.com, Amazon

Robert finds the passion of love, but things in his life change suddenly. He enters a world of betrayal, deceit, and treachery as he struggles to reunite with his one true love.

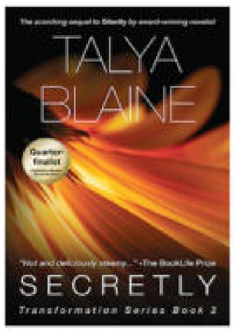
Ripples in the Waters by Lake Kawaguchi (The Tokyo Trilogy #1)



Jakob Halskov. Jakob Halskov. $8.49 paper (181p), ISBN 979-83-64725-96-7; $3.99 e-book, ASIN B0BMXK3B3B

Amazon, Kobo

The novel traces the sexual road trip of a lonely and neglected Japanese housewife, a suicidal salaryman who has been made redundant, and a CEO's young daughter kidnapped by the yakuza.



Secretly (Transformation #2)

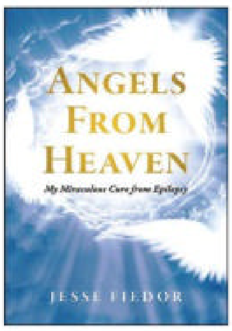
Talya Blaine. Talya Blaine Books. $18.99 paper (234p), ISBN 978-1-959336-04-4; $6.99 e-book, ISBN 978-1-959336-01-3

Amazon, Angus & Robertson, Apple iBooks, BN.com, Bookshop.org, IndieBound, Indigo, Kobo, Mondadori, Powell's, Thalia, Vivlio

Unquenchable chemistry. The rare gift of a second chance. Choices that threaten to destroy Quinn and Jonathan's future.

Nonfiction

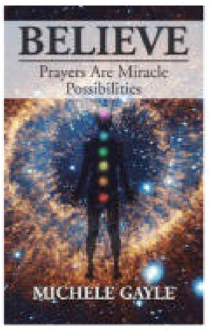
Angels from Heaven: My Miraculous Cure from Epilepsy



Jesse Fiedor. BookBaby. $15.95 paper (170p), ISBN 978-1-66782-393-5; $7.50 e-book, ISBN 978-1-66782-394-2

Angelsfromheaven.site, Amazon, BN.com

This story shares a beautiful inspiration from a miracle-filled life journey of a man before and after he accepted Christ in his heart.

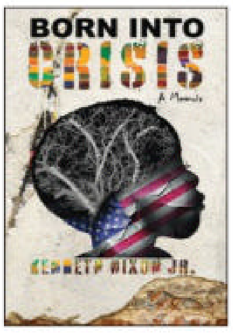


Believe: Prayers Are Miracle Possibilities

Michele Gayle. AuthorHouse. $13.99 paper (130p), ISBN 978-1-5246-9233-9

Amazon

This book may help readers eradicate the routine, boredom, and frustration from their prayer time.

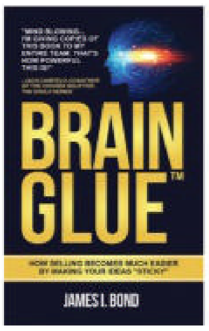


Born into Crisis: A Memoir

Kenneth Nixon Jr. Burning Soul Press. $10.99 e-book, ASIN B0BS7C57LT

Amazon, BN.com, Bookshop.org

The author shares his story of growing up with a mother with severe mental illness and a family stuck in an enduring cycle of trauma.

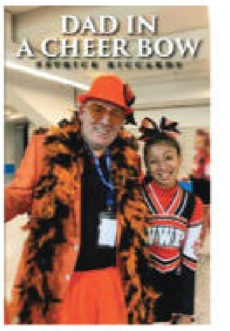


Brain Glue: How Selling Becomes Much Easier by Making Your Ideas "Sticky"

James I. Bond. U.S. Management. $28.99 (187p), ISBN 978-0-9988657-4-4

Amazon, Ingram

This marketing book gives readers tips to boost the selling power of ads, emails, social media posts, and presentations.

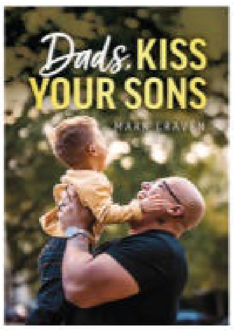


Dad in a Cheer Bow

Patrick Riccards. Patrick Riccards. $9.99 paper (186p), ISBN 978-1-956406-98-0

Amazon

An in-depth look into the cheerleading world and a father-daughter relationship. Riccard offers lessons learned coaching a team of tween girls.

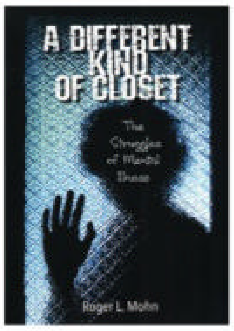


Dads, Kiss Your Sons

Mark Craven. Mark Craven. $14.99 paper (165p), ISBN 979-89-87769-20-1; 99¢ e-book, ASIN B0BXQ35H6N

Amazon, BN.com, Kobo

The story of overcoming a broken past and finding the joy of fatherhood.

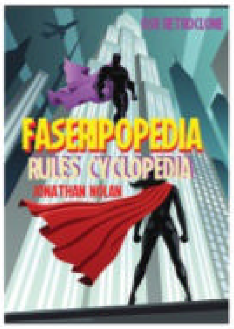


A Different Kind of Closet: The Struggles of Mental Illness

Roger L. Mohn. RND Publishing. $9.99 paper (112p), ISBN 978-0-9961193-0-6

Amazon, rndpublishing.com

Families dealing with mental illness live in a different world because negative stigma surrounds "mental illness." They live in a closet of secrecy, truly a different kind of closet.



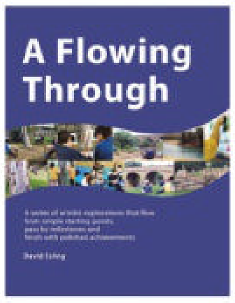
FASERIPopedia

Jonathan Nolan. Jonathan Nolan. $68.99 paper (397p), ISBN 978-1-4478-7044-9

Amazon, BN.com, DriveThruRPG, Eldar. Store, Lulu

This volume is the guide for game-masters and handbook for players alike who want to play FASERIP superhero games or any other kind of game using the FASERIP system.

PW SELECT LISTINGS

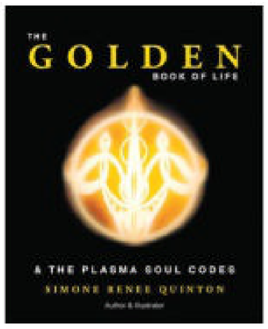


A Flowing Through: A Series of Artistic Explorations that Flow from Simple Starting Points, Pass by Milestones and Finish with Polished Achievements

David Esling. Balboa Press. $86.95 paper (366p), ISBN 978-1-982295-01-1; $3.99 e-book, ISBN 978-1-982295-02-8

Amazon

Teachers may find this retired teacher's plea inspirational to restore the relevance of the visual arts in education.

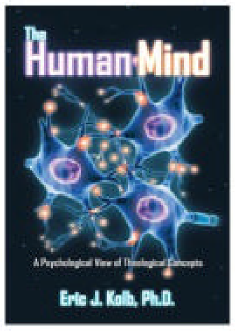


The Golden Book of Life: & the Plasma Soul Codes

Simone Renee Quinton. Balboa Press. $33.99 paper (598p), ISBN 978-1-982294-44-1; $3.99 e-book, ISBN 978-1-982294-45-8

Amazon

This self-improvement book encourages readers to converse with their limitless soul in plenty of practical means to enliven their lives.

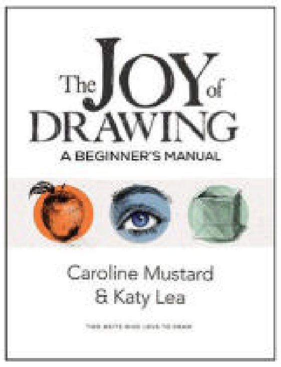


The Human Mind: A Psychological View of Theological Concepts

Eric J. Kolb. AuthorHouseUK. $20.11 paper (238p), ISBN 978-1-66559-807-1; $4.99 e-book, ISBN 978-1-66559-806-4

Amazon

The author compares the scientific understanding of the human mind with the teaching of the Bible.



The Joy of Drawing: A Beginner's Manual

Caroline Mustard and Katy Lea. Caroline Mustard. $17.95 paper (80p), ISBN 979-88-88968-83-3

Amazon

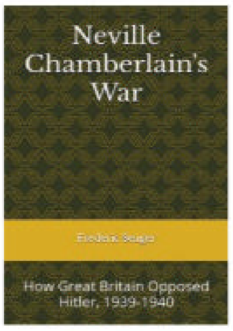
Learning to draw made easy with this step-by-step manual that includes video demos for each exercise and a free printable workbook.

Magical Mumbai Flavours: A Passionate Food Love Story

Seema Dalvi. Austin Macauley Publishers. $46.95 (244p), ISBN 978-1-398-46053-9; $31.95 paper, ISBN 978-1-398-46052-2

Amazon, BN.com

This book is a food love story. Readers may not only cook magical dishes, but they can cook dishes from different parts of India and beyond. With simple recipes, readers can cook with fresh ingredients.

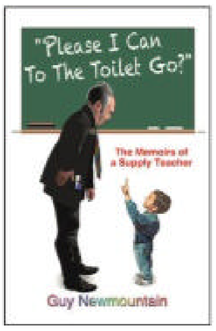


Neville Chamberlain's War: How Great Britain Opposed Hitler, 1939–1940

Frederic Seager. Frederic Seager. $22 paper (285p), ISBN 979-85-485-4879-5; $8.99 e-book, ASIN B09BQ2D67B

Amazon

This book argues that Neville Chamberlain's war was phony from the start and led to Hitler's greatest triumph, the conquest of Western, democratic Europe.

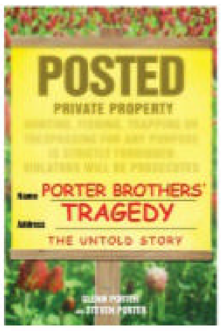


Please I Can to the Toilet Go? The Memoirs of a Supply Teacher

Guy Newmountain. Austin Macauley. $20.86 (218p), ISBN 978-1-03-580799-4; $15.95 paper, ISBN 978-1-03-580798-7

Austin Macauley

This book provides insight into supply teaching, covering the pros and cons of the vocation, and offers an honest and refreshing window into a largely hidden world.

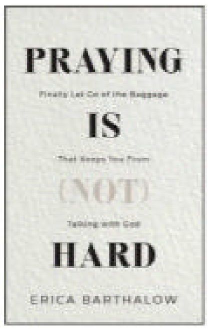


Porter Brothers' Tragedy: The Untold Story

Glenn and Steven Porter. Austin Macauley Publishers. $40.95 (474p), ISBN 978-1-68562-472-9; $25.95 paper, ISBN 978-1-68562-471-2

Amazon, BN.com

A true-life wrecking story that would not happen again in a million years. Things get bad for the Porters. Turn a few pages. The story gets worse.



Praying Is (Not) Hard

Erica Barthalow. Erica Barthalow Press. $16.99 paper (238p), ISBN 978-0-9989953-5-9; $9.99 e-book, ISBN 978-0-9989953-6-6

Amazon, Apple iBooks, BN.com, Google Play, Kobo

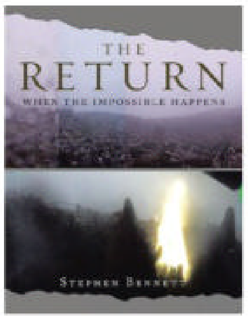
Talking to God should be easy, right? And yet, sometimes it isn't. This book suggests seven issues that are sabotaging readers' prayers and how to finally overcome them.

Present in the Past: A Narrative

Delavar Khomarlou. Delavar Khomarlou. $12.95 paper (138p), ISBN 978-1-77709-350-1

Amazon, BN.com, Indigo

The 1980–1988 Iran-Iraq War, a conflict mostly forgotten since, plays a central role and is the backdrop of the book.



The Return: When the Impossible Happens

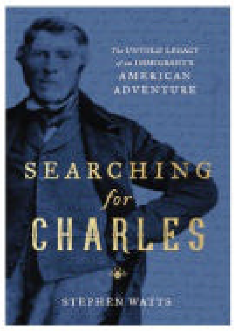
Stephen Bennett. Xlibris. $20.44 paper (70p), ISBN 978-1-66988-716-4; $4.99 e-book, ISBN 978-1-66988-717-1

Amazon

This is a true story based on the 20-year journey of Stephen and Somjeen

Bennett. This memoir is about hope amid darkness.

Searching for Charles: The Untold Legacy of an Immigrant's American Adventure

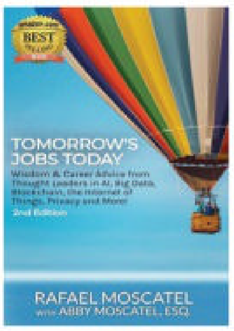


Stephen Watts. Houndstooth Press. $21.99 paper (604p), ISBN 978-1-5445-3192-2; $9.99 e-book, ISBN 978-1-5445-3193-9

Amazon

The transcribed letters of a pioneer English immigrant are presented with their backstory, followed by details on the 55-year journey to discover their author's final resting place.

Tomorrow's Jobs Today: Wisdom & Career Advice from Thought Leaders in AI, Big Data, Blockchain, the Internet of Things, Privacy and More

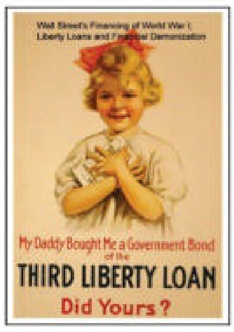


Rafael Moscatel and Abby Moscatel. JIA Publishing. $17.95 paper (162p), ISBN 979-89-87906-12-5; $9.99 e-book, ISBN 979-89-87906-10-1

Amazon, BN.com, Google Play

Readers may discover leadership secrets, career tips, and practical strategies used by today's most innovative business minds and renowned brands across the globe.

Wall Street's Financing of World War I: Liberty Loans and Financial Demonization

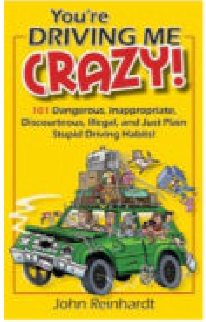


Kerry Segrave. Historical Press. $18.99 paper (232p), ISBN 978-1-77703-708-6; $4.33 e-book, ISBN 978-1-77703-707-9

Amazon, Kobo

People refusing to buy Liberty Loan bonds were demonized as "financial slackers." Those who declined to purchase bonds were ruthlessly attacked by naming, shaming, force, and coercion.

You're Driving Me Crazy! 101 Dangerous, Inappropriate, Discourteous, Illegal, and Just Plain Stupid Driving Habits!



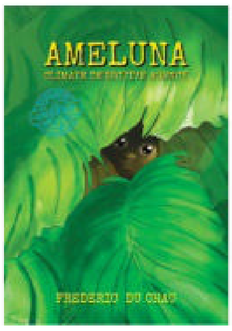
John Reinhardt. John Reinhardt. $10 paper (114p), ISBN 979-89-87631-00-3

Amazon, BN.com

Recognize dangerous driving situations and how to avoid them. With these tools, readers may be able to enjoy many safe years of driving.

Children's/YA

Ameluna Climate Detective Agency

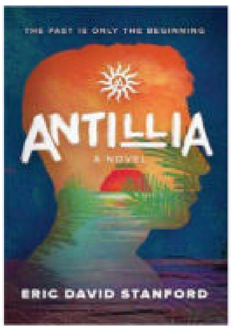


Frederic Du Chau. Frederic Du Chau. $29.99 (280p), ISBN 979-89-86222-30-1; $6.99 e-book, ISBN 979-89-86222-31-8

fredericduchau.com

In this graphic novel, Luna and Amelie solve mysteries caused by climate change as they encounter frozen zombies and talking plants and figure out middle school problems.

Antillia

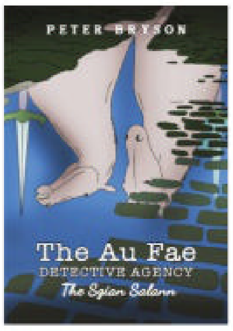


Eric David Stanford. ABT Publishing. $15.99 paper (298p), ISBN 979-89-87478-30-1; $8.99 e-book, ISBN 979-89-87478-31-8

Amazon

A 16-year-old goes to a Caribbean island to get revenge on his neglectful father, only to become mixed up in a life-or-death conflict between his new girlfriend's father and two others.

The Au Fae Detective Agency: The Sgian Salann

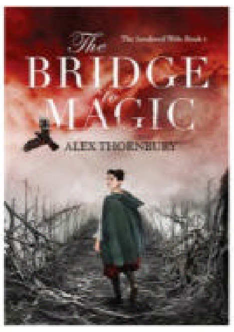


Peter Bryson. Austin Macauley Publishers. $15.95 paper (226p), ISBN 978-1-398-47325-6; $4.50 e-book, ISBN 978-1-398-47326-3

Amazon, BN.com

Finn runs the Au Fae Detective Agency. A knife is stolen from the Nymphs, and Finn and company are tasked with finding and revealing old foes of the Fae—Kelpies.

The Bridge to Magic

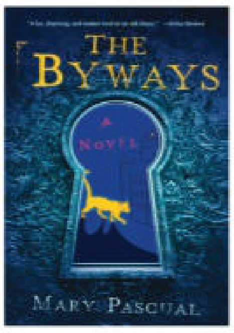


Alex Thornbury. Shadow Lore Publishing. $17.99 paper (390p), ISBN 978-0-645-49700-7; $8.99 e-book, ISBN 978-0-645-49701-4

Amazon, Apple iBooks, BN.com, Kobo

This fantasy debut is set in the dying world where humanity is likened to weakness and the only path to salvation is the same path that might lead to death.

The Byways

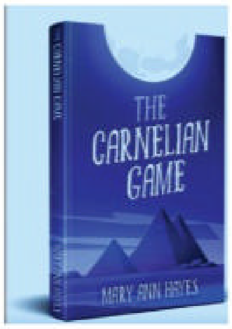


Mary Pascual. SparkPress. $17.95 paper (320p), ISBN 978-1-68463-190-2; $12.95 e-book, ASIN B0B8H6DP71

Bookshop.org

After landing herself in the byways, a mysterious and magical world, high school student CeeCee Harper must escape before she's trapped for good and loses her loved ones forever.

The Carnelian Game



Mary Ann Hayes, illus. by Michael T. Stanton. Elite Authors. $13 paper (246p), ISBN 979-83-60021-56-8; $8 e-book, ASIN B0BSVR7H7P

Amazon

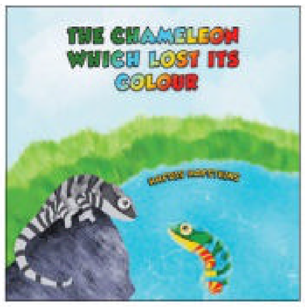
A boy named Desmond and his magic carpet, Mariah, compete with 11 others in the Global Magic Carpet Games for the adventures of a lifetime.

The Chameleon Which Lost Its Colour

Hafdis Hafsteins. Austin Macauley Publishers. $28.95 (50p), ISBN 978-1-03-580744-4; $13.95 paper, ISBN 978-1-03-580743-7

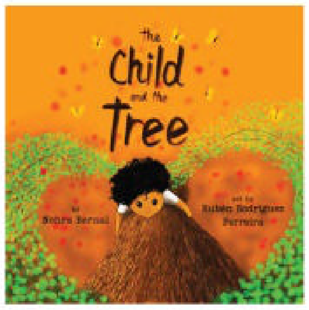
Amazon, BN.com

Teasing others isn't a nice thing to do, as



Blaze the chameleon learns when his colors disappear and he needs the help of the other animals to find them again.

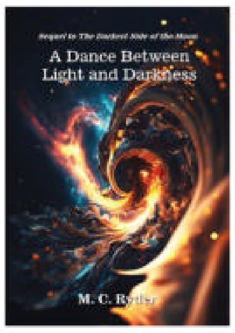
The Child and the Tree: A Tale for Better Times



Nohra Bernal, illus. by Rubén Rodriguez Ferreira. Arreboles. $25 (42p), ISBN 978-1-954548-08-4; $9.99 paper, ISBN 978-1-954548-07-7
Ingram

In a desert, a child discovers a tree and grows a forest before leaving in search of a place to call home.

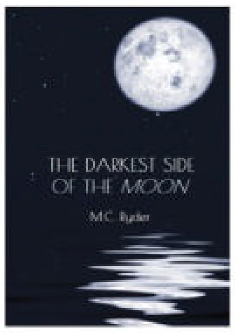
A Dance Between Light and Darkness



M.C. Ryder. M.E.C. Publishing. $19.99 paper (314p), ISBN 979-89-87074-62-6; $2.99 e-book, ISBN 979-89-87074-63-3
Amazon, BN.com, Books-a-Million, Powell's, ThriftBooks

Vince mourns for the one he lost after the war. When bodies start piling up, he discovers someone from his past is still at large, along with an unknown threat of a sinister evil.

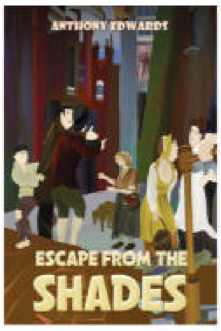
The Darkest Side of the Moon



M.C. Ryder. M.E.C. Publishing. $19.99 paper (332p), ISBN 979-89-87074-60-2; $4.99 e-book, ISBN 979-89-87074-61-9
Alibris, Amazon, Blackwell, BN.com, Book Depository, Books-a-Million, Kobo, IndieBound, Powell's, Scribd, SuperBookDeals, SecondSale, Textbookx

Independent Nadine Drexel uncovers who mysterious new student Vinson Weber really is. Can she keep her best friend, Camille, from getting caught in the crossfire?

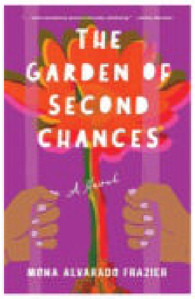
Escape from the Shades



Anthony Edwards. Austin Macauley Publishers. $7.95 paper (60p), ISBN 978-1-398-48007-0; $4.50 e-book, ISBN 978-1-398-48008-7
Amazon, BN.com

A tale of children's victory over Victorian poverty and criminal justice. Living rough, Bobbie is attacked, and Tom, coming to her rescue, is arrested and tried at the Old Bailey.

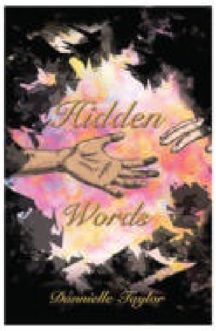
The Garden of Second Chances



Mona Alvarado Frazier. SparkPress. $17.95 paper (376p), ISBN 978-1-68463-204-6; $8.99 e-book, ASIN B0B8CMXWZ7
Bookshop.org

Juana, a 17-year-old mother, is imprisoned for murdering her husband. She claims she's innocent, but no one believes her, and her undocumented status causes issues.

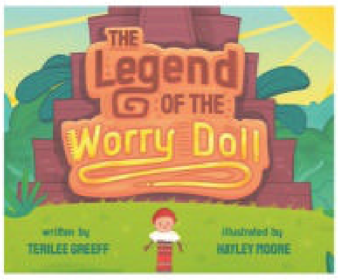
Hidden Words



Dannielle Taylor. Austin Macauley Publishers. $29.95 (250p), ISBN 978-1-398-47564-9; $15.95 paper, ISBN 978-1-398-45063-9
Amazon, BN.com

Christopher, like any normal boy, is merely trying to make it through his final days of school. However, not all is as simple as perceived when his mind is like a battlefield.

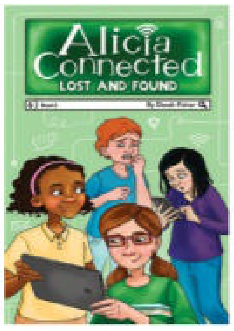
The Legend of the Worry Doll



TeriLee Greeff, illus. by Hayley Moore. IngramSpark. $17.99 (36p), ISBN 979-89-87493-50-2; $12.99 paper, ISBN 979-89-87493-51-9
Amazon, BN.com

This story from Guatemala is about tiny dolls wrapped in colorful fabric that can help children address their fears and anxiety.

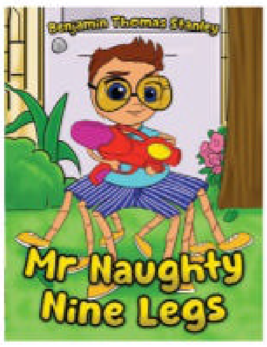
Lost and Found



Derek Fisher, illus. by Heather Workman. Indie. $3.99 e-book, ASIN B0BSSK1CVD
Amazon, Ingram, Kobo

In the third and final book in the Alicia Connected series, the friends learn how to stay safe on the internet and discover the importance of device responsibility.

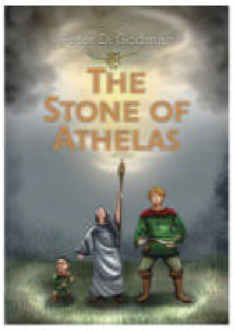
Mr Naughty Nine Legs



Benjamin Thomas Stanley. Austin Macauley Publishers. $27.95 (42p), ISBN 978-1-398-46858-0; $12.95 paper, ISBN 978-1-398-46857-3
Amazon, BN.com

A spider with nine legs gets into all sorts of trouble.

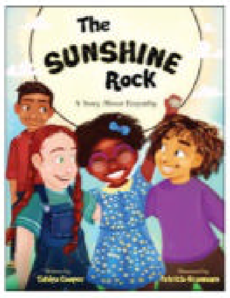
The Stone of Athelas



Peter D. Godman. Austin Macauley Publishers. $26.95 paper (480p), ISBN 978-1-398-46026-3; $4.50 e-book, ISBN 978-1-398-46027-0
Amazon, BN.com

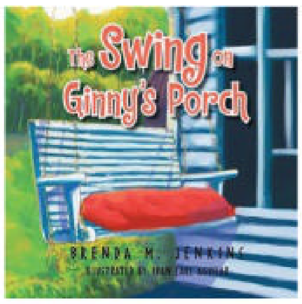
A young magician, unsure how to use his magic, learns as he goes before the showdown with a powerful necromancer.

The Sunshine Rock: A Story About Empathy



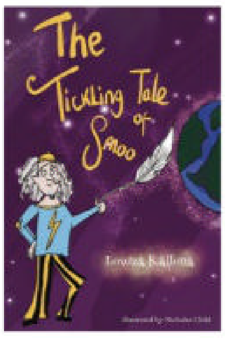
Tahiya Cooper, illus. by Patricia Grannum. All Booked Publishing. $12.99 paper (28p), ASIN B0BW2MGT56

hangingwithmisscooper.com, Amazon, Ingram
Alexis's brother gives her a Sunshine Rock to use whenever she needs support. The rock is quickly put to the test as, full of nerves, Alexis navigates her first day at her new school.

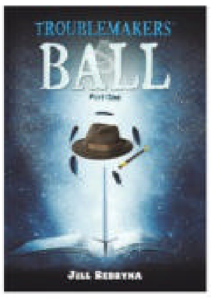


The Swing on Ginny's Porch
Brenda M. Jenkins. Author's Tranquility Press. $9.99 paper (26p), ISBN 978-1-959930-14-3
Amazon
An old porch swing becomes a special place for a child and his grandmother, whom he calls "Ginny." They experience life's most simple and difficult moments in the comfort of the swing.

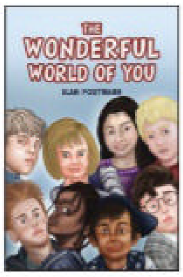
The Tickling Tale of Smoo
Louiza Kallona. Louiza Kallona. $8.99 paper (126p), ISBN 979-83-7006-653-5; $2.99 e-book, ASIN B0BQFNF5C3
Amazon, BN.com, Book Depository, Saxo



When laughter mysteriously disappears from the world, Lucy and Ben McClafferty go on the search for Gabel Lylhu, aka Belly Laugh, one of the secret ticklers of the world.

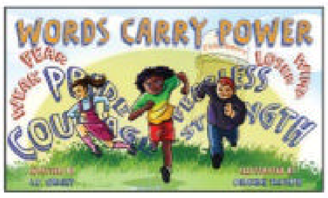


Troublemakers' Ball, Part 1
Jill Rebryna. Austin Macauley Publishers. $19.95 paper (242p), ISBN 978-1-63829-149-7; $4.50 e-book, ISBN 978-1-63829-150-3
Amazon, BN.com
A troublemaker who does the best he can with what he has is confronted with an angel who falls right in front of him.



The Wonderful World of You
Alan Portmann. Austin Macauley Publishers. $28.95 (102p), ISBN 978-1-63829-962-2; $14.95 paper, ISBN 978-1-63829-963-9
Amazon, BN.com
This book helps teach ethical values and encourages vocabulary development with an evaluation activity for interactive dialogue on topics like bullying.

Words Carry Power



A.P. Wright, illus. by Ogbechie Triumph. Pristine Envisions. $12.75 paper (66p), ISBN 978-1-68489-938-8; $5.40 e-book, ASIN B09V2ZZLZB
Amazon, BN.com
Pineal learns that negative words make him feel bad and positive words build him up. ■

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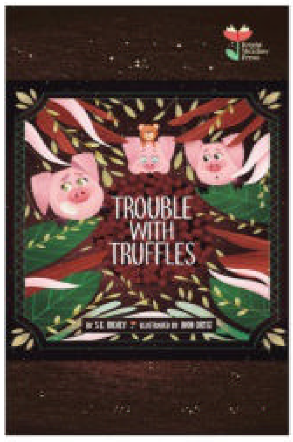
A lightning bolt (⚡) indicates an Editor's Pick, a book of outstanding quality.

PICTURE BOOK

⚡ EDITOR'S PICK

Trouble with Truffles

S.E. Richey | Bright Meadow Press
36p, e-book, t$2.99, ISBN 979-8-9853045-1-0



Hammy struggles with sharing toys with their younger sibling Oinkers, but when Mom steps in to mediate the situation she finds herself having to take her own advice in this humorous twist on books about sharing. Tempted by the alluring smell of truffles—every pig's favorite treat—Hammy takes Oinkers along on a quest for justice, sniffing out Mom's truffle stash and her own struggle to share. Jhon Ortiz's expressive and sometimes lush digital illustrations add to the humor, focusing on characters' faces and their outsized reaction to match the text. Kids and parents alike will appreciate the charm of this ironic lesson.

Trouble with Truffles showcases an unorthodox method of getting siblings to bond and get along, but does so with heart and humor the whole way, from Hammy going "hog wild" while refusing to share, to much boisterous oinking, to the smears on the pigs' faces after digging into their truffle feast. For those unfamiliar with truffles or pigs' connection to them, Richey uses the plot to introduce the connection, while those already familiar with pigs' affinity for these prized fungi will likely already be laughing. Richey notes the visual similarities between chocolate truffles and mushroom truffles on a "Did you know?" page. Further information about pigs and truffles can be found there, too, as well as a map of some locations where truffles can be found globally.

Mom is forced to follow her own advice in this playful tale of pigs learning to share.

Great for fans of Rachel Bright's *The Squirrels Who Squabbled*, Jory John's *Something's Wrong!*

Readers will notice subtle nods to Sherlock Holmes in the illustrations, furthering the visual humor. Well-suited to self-deprecating or at least good-humored parents and the kids that love them, as well as folks looking to learn more about pigs or getting siblings to share, *Trouble with Truffles* has plenty to offer and is sure to elicit more than a few giggles.

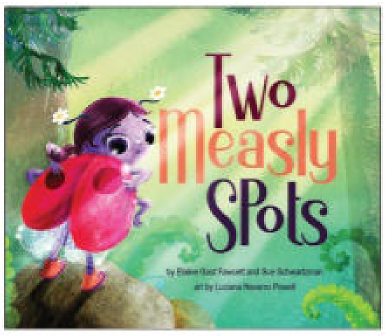
Cover: **A-** | Design & typography: **A** | Illustrations: **A** Editing: **A** | Marketing copy: **A**

PICTURE BOOK

⚡ EDITOR'S PICK

Two Measly Spots!

Elaine Gast Fawcett and Sue Schwartzman | UpSpot Publishing
36p, trade paper, $12.99, ISBN 979-8-987-27381-4


Two Measly Spots
by Elaine Gast Fawcett and Sue Schwartzman
art by Luciana Navarro Powell

Fawcett and Schwartzman's charming picture book for children introduces a young ladybug named Lulu, who is convinced that the two black dots on her bright red wings are simply not enough. As all of her siblings, aunts, uncles, and cousins wake from their winter slumber, Lulu notices they have more spots than she does—and soon "Lulu couldn't get spots off her mind." To remedy her situation, she sets off on a journey to acquire more spots and meets other speckled creatures: a hungry fawn, a sweaty salamander, and a sneaky snake who nearly has Lulu for a snack. When she finally heads back home, her "Gran-Dottie" who has "oodles of spots" delivers a startling revelation: "I used to worry I wasn't red enough. Too many spots!"

This is when Lulu's initial surprise at her grandmother's statement turns to acceptance, and she realizes she already has everything she needs. This lesson will resonate with children as they begin to work through complicated feelings such as jealousy toward friends or siblings. Lulu's dilemma also presents many opportunities for children and adults to talk about what it means to have "enough," as prompted by the open-ended discussion questions at the end. In a culture that promotes excess and glorifies having the most, the concept of Lulu simply being satisfied with having what she needs to fly feels refreshing.

In this charming picture book, a ladybug learns her scant spots are enough.

Great for fans of David Shannon's *A Bad Case of Stripes*, Marion Deuchars's *Bob the Artist.*

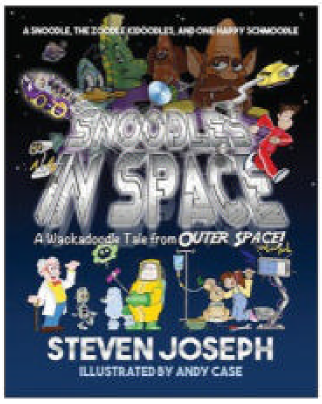
On each page, Luciana Navarro Powell's colorful, imaginative illustrations help bring this story to life. The playfully cartoonish, anthropomorphic ladybugs have wide, expressive eyes and full heads of hair, and they wear bowties, necklaces, and shoes. The pictures follow Lulu on her adventures, with each scene clearly showing her feelings of surprise, confusion, or frustration. This will help young people identify the ladybug's feelings and link them to their own experiences, making this a relatable story that kids and adults will want to read more than once.

Cover: **A** | Design & typography: **A** | Illustrations: **A** Editing: **A** | Marketing copy: **A**

PICTURE BOOK

Snoodles in Space

Steven Joseph | Enigami
62p, hardcover, $29.99, ISBN 979-8-9876117-0-8


A SNOODLE, THE ZOODLE KIDOODLES, AND ONE HAPPY SCHMOODLE
SNOODLES IN SPACE
A Wackadoodle Tale from OUTER SPACE!
STEVEN JOSEPH
ILLUSTRATED BY ANDY CASE

In a future that "may be just around the corner," the vehicle of choice is a Snoodlemobile, which runs on noodles. When the eccentric family responsible for Snoodles and their predecessor, the Krautmobile, get wrapped up in an intergalactic emergency that may leave the planet devoid of all noodles, only siblings Briana Brainy Broodle and Ricky Rockadoodle can save the family and the planet through the power of teamwork and following your passion. Focused more on whimsy and wordplay than coherent plotting, *Snoodles in Space* is sure to delight young readers who relish the absurd—and perhaps get a chuckle from the adults as well.

The NoodleVerse, first introduced in Joseph's *Snoodles, Kidoodles, Poodles and Lots and Lots of Noodles*, has many quirks that Joseph trusts readers to discover without exposition, such as the naming conventions, wherein siblings and family members all have completely different last names. The series creates a sense of just-roll-with-it silliness: the logic behind the Kidoodles' choice to abduct Norman Noodle and Sally Stroodle for their "knowledge of brain surgery and rocket science" simply from the observation that they use idioms relevant to those professions gets funnier the more readers think about it. And of course the "brain surgery" and "rocket science" in this world are unconventional, to say the least.

Absurdism reigns in this wacky space adventure for fans of wordplay.

Great for fans of Jason Carter Eaton's *Great, Now We've Got Barbarians!*, Deborah Underwood's *XO, Exoplanet.*

Those willing to embrace such flights of goofiness will find much to giggle over in the wordplay, daft storytelling, and occasional fart joke. Andy Case's detailed digital illustrations provide additional worldbuilding and ground the reader through the silliness of the narrative. Back matter includes a game and a guide to the characters and technology of the NoodleVerse. Best suited for those looking for nonsensical escapism, a dose of whimsy with their sci-fi, and rhyming names in spades, *Snoodles in Space* delivers a laugh with its originality.

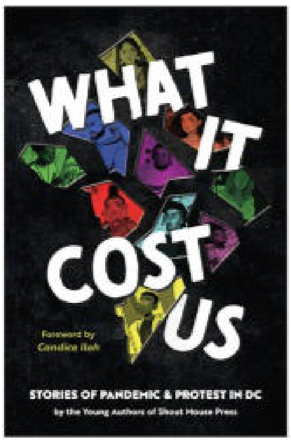
Cover: **B** | Design & typography: **A-** | Illustrations: **A-** Editing: **B** | Marketing copy: **A-**

FICTION

EDITOR'S PICK

What It Cost Us: Stories of Pandemic and Protest in DC

The Young Authors of Shout Mouse Press | Shout Mouse Press
332p, trade paper, $14.99, ISBN 978-1-950-80755-0



What It Cost Us is a poignant and powerful anthology that follows, through fiction, the experiences of minority students in high school and college in the DC metro area during the first year of COVID-19 pandemic. The stories are arranged linearly, with the first taking place just as the first wave of the virus shuts down the country. The opening stories examine those first few months where everything felt like a huge loss—missing family, friends, jobs, events, proms—and people found strength in small victories. As the book advances into summer and fall, these students face grief, as people they love are sick or dying, from the virus or from violence, at a time when communities faced increasing division and the murder of George Floyd brought urgent attention to issues of discrimination and policing.

What It Cost Us surveys an extraordinarily fractious stretch of American history, as the students write with fresh power about loss, about the failures of the system around them, and on how to decide when, how, and where they should speak out. Then, just as the smallest sense of normality begins to creep into these writers' lives, the students face the explosive events of January 6, 2021. "Just wait," the prescient mother of one student declares. "The story of this day is going to be told very differently in different homes in the coming days."

DC students share their moving experiences of pandemic life and grief.

Great for fans of Nancy S. Nelson's *Young People of the Pandemic*, Ibi Zoboi's *Black Enough.*

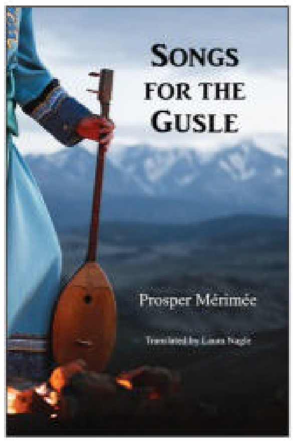
Through the lives of these ten young people, readers will be faced with a reminder of the burdens young people have borne, their struggle to have experiences validated, and the pain of coping with loss. From an immigrant desperately trying to live up to expectations who finds an ally, to the students with friendships seen in a new light amid protests and riots, to the young man questioning what he missed after losing a friend, each of these stories is a reminder of the resilience of those who hold the future in their hands.

Cover: **A** | Design & typography: **A** | Illustrations: **A** Editing: **B** | Marketing copy: **A**

FICTION

Songs for the Gusle

Prosper Mérimée, trans. from the French by Laura Nagle | Frayed Edge Press
141p, trade paper, $20, ISBN 978-1-642-51045-4



Translator Laura Nagle offers English-speaking readers the chance to experience renowned French romantic writer Prosper Mérimée's controversial 1827 collection of annotated "Illyrian" folktales and songs in full for the first time, nearly two centuries following the original publication. At first blush, readers may take *Songs for the Gusle* for a 19th century French travel writer's earnest anthology of folklore from the Illyrian provinces (parts of Croatia, Slovenia, and Italy during the Napoleonic Era), tales that the narrator translates from Illyrian, his umbrella term for several languages spoken in those regions, into French. But soon Mérimée's creation takes on surprising satirical complexity, especially in the original's footnotes, which stud most pages and playfully anticipate 20th century experiments like Nabakov's Pnin.

Previous English translations of *Songs for the Gusle* were primarily concerned with the ballads, songs, and stories themselves and all but ignored the narrator-translator's extensive footnotes, in which (as Nagle notes) "the 'translator' emerges as a recognizable character" in his own right, inviting readers to question the translator's cultural analyses and the narrative voice itself. Those footnotes are often pompous and include inaccurate information about the regions upon which the original translator claims to be an expert: a corpse's still-growing hair and nails, one footnote insists, are "clear evidence of vampirism."

The first full English translation of Prosper Mérimée's playful work of "fakelore."

Great for fans of James Macpherson's *The Poems of Ossian*, Gabriel de Guilleragues's *The Letters of a Portuguese Nun.*

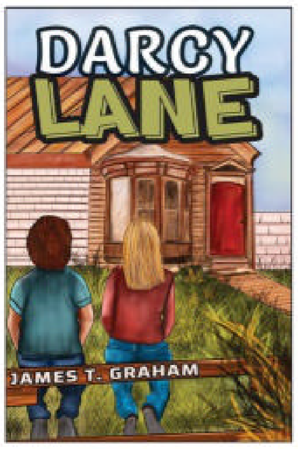
The power of *Songs for the Gusle* for contemporary English-speaking readers is in this puzzling tension between the real and unreal, which is darkly familiar in the online age, wherein truth is continually uncertain and subject to cultural biases. The fictionalized tales, crisply told and alive with mystery in Nagle's translation, fascinate, but the richer pleasure and meaning comes from what Nagle calls the "untangl[ing] [of] La Guzla's threads of fact, fiction, and satire." Readers fascinated by quasi-fiction and 19th-century French literature will relish this chance to explore Mérimée's "fakelore" creation.

Cover: **A** | Design & typography: **A** | Illustrations: **–** Editing: **A** | Marketing copy: **A**

FICTION

Darcy Lane

James T. Graham | Austin Macauley Publishers
128p, trade paper, $6.99, ISBN 978-1-398-40017-7



Graham's debut novella offers the haunting tale of a young woman reentering society and grappling with reality after experiencing wrenching trauma and loss as a girl. In Lancashire, England, Elise Rose's life is upended at the age of seven when she witnesses her mother's murder at the hands of a gentleman caller. Then, at the age of 20, Elise is released into the custody of her grandfather, Emmett, at the end of a two year stay in a psychiatric unit after an episode of psychosis. When she stumbles upon a quaint house on Darcy Lane one day, with a bold red door and a pond out back, Elise becomes fixated with what the house symbolizes and the future she envisions.

Darcy Lane's emotionally charged story pulses with themes of loss, redemption, and growth. While taking on weighty themes, Graham draws intriguing parallels between Elise's life and her mother's, from their strong resemblance to their decisions to trust the wrong people, creating suspense as the story progresses. The characters are both complex and relatable, their motivations, as in life, sometimes enigmatic. The prose, though, is pared down and brick-blunt: "Stood at his bedroom window was Emmett. The two of them held stare for a moment." Those sturdy sentences, though, can be at tense odds with the view of the world through Elise's eyes, as readers will at times wonder whether what she perceives is what's truly happening. Graham also allows himself to change perspective within a chapter or even paragraph, which demands readers stay alert to keep up.

A moving novella of a young woman facing the lingering effects of childhood trauma.

Great for fans of Amber McBride's *Me: Moth*, Kathleen Glasgow's *Girl in Pieces.*

Those who do will find themselves rooting for the protagonist to break a generational cycle of mistakes and overcome the tragic setbacks of her childhood. The plot moves at a steady pace toward a conclusion that, in hindsight, feels inevitable and will please fans of humane, realistic fiction in which characters face traumatic pasts.

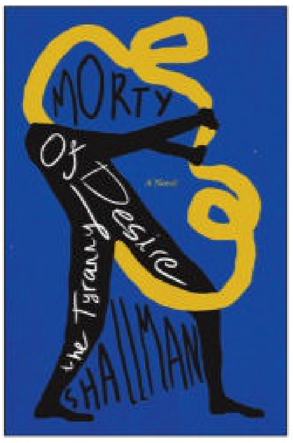
Cover: **C** | Design & typography: **A** | Illustrations: **–** Editing: **B** | Marketing copy: **A**

FICTION

The Tyranny of Desire

Morty Shallman | Flying Bed Books

212p, hardcover, $29.99, ISBN 979-8-9863548-0-4



Puchy Mushkin, the hero of this ribald and incisive provocation from author/musician Shallman, has a problem: his overwhelming desire can only be matched by his enormous penis. Being endowed with that "Rubirosan love muscle," it turns out, is "a double-edge sword." Believing that all his many travails—among them a failed marriage, an ex-lover who literally crucifies him, and his recent exile from polite society—stem from his unquenchable hedonism, Puchy vows to start living life devoid of want, believing, "… desire is a dangerous thing. The source of all suffering and pain." This seemingly noble pursuit backfires for Puchy, though Shallman has a ball conjuring up the wildest situations and transgressions in a carnivalesque Los Angeles, including a mayoral campaign, an odd irredeemable love, and involvement with a woman who sells her feces to the highest bidder.

The story may sound at first blush like the world's biggest penis joke, but readers who relish irreverent literary play will be rewarded with insight and challenges to convention, especially when Puchy falls into his more introspective moments. By trying to live for want of nothing, Puchy finds out that being the anti-yes-man also has its cons. From one extreme to another, the fine line between being in control and being controlled sends Puchy into a host of extreme—and often uproarious—setpieces in the spirit of the norm-shattering, can-you-top-this? sexually frank comic novels of a generation ago, with a welcome queer edge. One of Puchy's breakthroughs finds him thinking, "…when you murder desire, desire doesn't suffer, only you and everyone around you."

The riotously bawdy story of a man finding it harder than it looks to live without a care.

Great for fans of Arthur Nersesian, Gary Reilly's *The Asphalt Warrior.*

Jolts of such wisdom offer relief from the darkness and depravity. Much of the humor stems from its cast of politically incorrect characters, most of whom reveal surprising depths in what at first might seem the shallow swamps of their personas. Still, the comedy is proudly over-the-top, edging into the realm of bawdy vaudeville, destructive not just of what used to be called "decency" but niceties like narrative momentum and clarity. Puchy's just too much for this world.

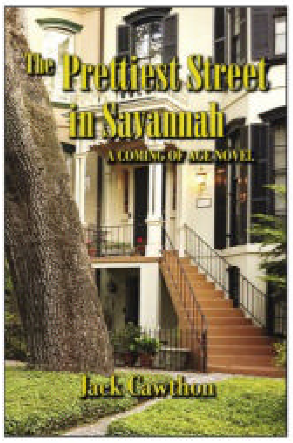
Cover: **A-** | Design & typography: A | Illustrations: – Editing: **A-** | Marketing copy: **A-**

FICTION

The Prettiest Street in Savannah: A Coming of Age Novel

Jack Cawthon

314p, e-book, $4.99, ISBN 979-8-218-12987-3



The fiction debut from Cawthon (author of *Origins & Faith*) lives up to its title with its beautiful juxtaposition of loss, empathy, and courage, all set in a neighborhood neatly sewn together by Cawthon's warm storytelling. Present day Savannah is home to a low-income family teetering on the brink of ruin with matriarch Jolene terminally ill and son Billy Ray adapting to manhood as a teenager whose father has deserted them. Immediate concerns for his younger brother and dodging family conflicts weigh down Billy Ray from the start. Cawthon invites readers to walk alongside Billy Ray on his many trials, observing tough decision-making, reveling in the young man's strength, and witnessing his maturation and the development of his moral character.

Bullying surfaces in many interactions between characters, a theme that does not discriminate on age, relation, or circumstance. Confrontations at school with peers occur frequently, while at home he faces all-too-common altercations instigated by his uncle. But vital moments of tender honesty between Billy Ray and his steadfast supporter Aunt Becky give depth to their family's complex relationships. With direct prose and clear love for his characters, Cawthon blends sometimes painful realism with an abiding belief in resilience and the selflessness of the best of humanity.

The ultimately heartening story of an impoverished Savannah coming of age.

Great for fans of Rose Betit's *Sparrows*, V. L. Brunskill's *Waving Backwards.*

Cawthon throws many obstacles at his protagonist, some devastating and violent. But through it all the theme of "how to keep faith in the face of fear" powers the story. The author's also attentive to problems that can seem minor by comparison, such as Billy Ray's embarrassment for being "some sort of freak" for having an old flip phone—later, it's with the greatest elation that he receives a laptop as a Christmas gift. Such sweet moments bring solace. Readers who relish stories of good people finding their path, with prayer and lots of heart, will want to walk this street.

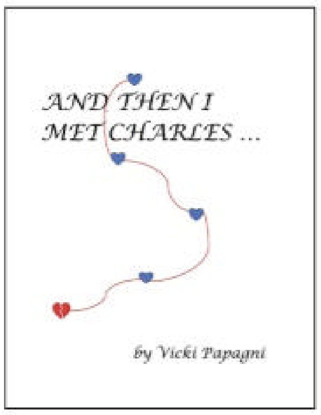
Cover: **B** | Design & typography: **A** | Illustrations: – Editing: **A** | Marketing copy: **A-**

MYSTERY/THRILLER

And Then I Met Charles

Vicki Papagni

202p, hardcover, $8.99, ISBN 979-8-809-96720-4



Papagni's debut blends romance and mystery with rich worldbuilding. Charles and Alex are one of those couples that boasts a great origin story: they met at a Boston diner in a chance encounter and enjoyed an instant connection, with Alex afterwards feeling she owes him a minor debt. Charles is a self-made investment banker with a teenage son, Charlie, while Alex is a gorgeous, considerate kindergarten teacher from a posh background. Things seem poised for the two of them to share an idyllic relationship, but life is not that simple: Charles's work life is full of murky dealings, and before long, Alex and Charlie get dragged into it. Are their lives headed straight towards tragedy?

The novel's first half is squarely a romance, showing how the leads came together: when Alex phones Charles after their first meeting, a mixup has him expecting a business contact on the line, so he answers "Hello you nasty, SOB"! This upbeat courtship is offset by a cast of eclectic, well-rounded characters—Papagni has done a great job of building a robust world and ecosystem around her leads that supports them and lends their lives credibility. Deeper in, though, the plot thickens and the mystery and suspense elements become prominent, involving the SEC, a stalker, a break-in, and a murder. Meanwhile, Charles faces temptation—and this hard declaration from Alex: "I need to know if you have broken the law and what other shoe is going to drop."

An endearing romance with a Boston businessman turns suspenseful.

Great for fans of Linda Howard's *Mr. Perfect*, Taylor Jenkins Reid's *Forever, Interrupted.*

Readers, too, will be anticipating the drop of those shoes, and some of the plot twists strain credulity. But overall, there's a lot to enjoy in this novel full of conversations, friendships, and a mystery, all of which are dealt with an airy touch, imbuing the material with an inviting lightness despite some darker themes. Lovers of romance and family dramas will enjoy this book which is both endearing and easy to read.

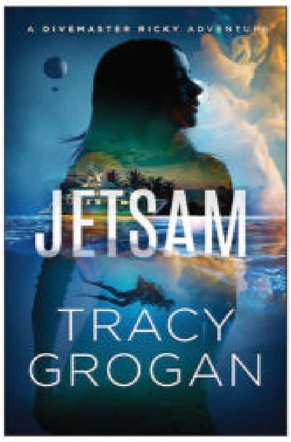
Cover: **C** | Design & typography: **B** | Illustrations: – Editing: **B+** | Marketing copy: **A-**

MYSTERY/THRILLER

Jetsam: A Divemaster Ricky Adventure

Tracy Grogan

388p, e-book, $4.99, ISBN 979-8-9850140-4-4



Professional scuba diver Ricky Yamamoto returns for a third adventure in Grogan's Divemaster Ricky series (following *Derelict*), this time tasked by mysterious clients with collecting samples in the waters off southeast Asia. On the boat with her are old friend Captain Rich and the couple who hired them, Lonnie and Margo, lottery winners who are funding an environmental study. (Their boat's name? *Powerballer*.) The expedition soon draws the scrutiny of pirates, the Thai navy, and the Myanmar authorities. As the situation sinks from bad to worse, Ricky finds her clients have been hiding things from her—and that she now must solve multiple mysteries and use her wits to save her life.

Ricky narrates, her observations powered with a lively humor, and Captain Rich is a great foil, with their ongoing love-hate relationship a highlight. The plot takes some time to really get moving, and then has so many twists (including a surprising personal connection) that readers will have to work some to keep up, but the snappy dialog, larger-than-life cast, and fascinating milieu keep the pages turning. "Give me warm, gin-clear water and colorful reefs," Ricky declares, and her love for the sea sets her and the series apart, with this entry finding time for her thoughts on orca, threats to coral, and our changing oceans.

Also enlivening the book are some terrific diving scenes. Grogan delivers almost poetic descriptions of sea life and does a great job with the beauty of southeast Asia: a delta alive with tributaries and side-channels "was like a massive, shimmering fractal." Readers interested in diving technology will find much detail here, though Ricky & co. also find themselves in a number of action scenes, some of them on a Clive Cussler level of inventiveness. Through it all, Ricky shows a remarkable talent for both cool fatalism and self-preservation—she finds "a certain satisfaction" in kicking one adversary in the head—leaving readers to eagerly await what she'll get into next.

This scuba thriller series dives into danger with an agreeably light touch.

Great for fans of Micki Browning's *Beached*, Andrew Mayne's *The Girl Beneath the Sea.*

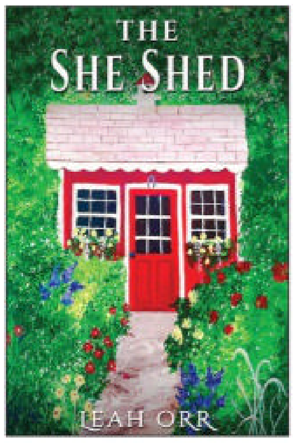
Cover: **A** | Design & typography: **A** | Illustrations: **–** Editing: **A-** | Marketing copy: **B+**

MYSTERY/THRILLER

The She Shed

Leah Orr

220p, trade paper, $9.99, ISBN 979-8-985-57834-8



Orr (*The Executive Suite*) crafts a cozy mystery that offers a fresh spin on the lengths we'll go to for true love. A neighborhood dog digging up a human jawbone in idyllic Jensen Beach, Florida, gives the neighbors something to talk about—and sets off a disturbing series of events for Charlotte, whose Aunt Adeline just happens to own the bone-filled yard responsible for all the fuss. When Adeline goes missing, local law enforcement rings up Charlotte to fill her in on the investigation, and she's shocked to discover there's a whole host of human remains buried in her aunt's yard.

The mystery's standard fare here, but that doesn't take away from the fun of unraveling Adeline's past, particularly when Charlotte stumbles onto a cryptic poem and video log of her aunt's seeming confession. While she's deciphering her aunt's clues, Charlotte gets caught up with local cop Derek—but just as things start to heat up between the two, Charlotte gets an ominous warning that there's more to Derek than meets the eye. That suggestion sets up the novel for an unconventional twist in the end (some readers may be discomfited by revelations that keep it all in the family), but Orr keeps readers spinning with some considerable things-are-not-as-they-seem unveilings throughout.

The She Shed's draw is undoubtedly Orr's quirky characters. Adeline's closest friends—"old-school Grateful Dead hippie" Randall, gal pal Millie, and the enigmatic, angry Betty—add plenty of fuel to the small-town fire, as does the questionable mayor, who's formed his own vigilante squad to "protect women" but seems desperate to cover up the town's slave-holding secrets at the same time. Readers will appreciate Orr's tidy wrap-up of the murders, and most of the characters earn the happy ending they deserve; the town, however, turns out to be "full of skeletons—literally." Backmatter includes entertaining recipes from one of the story's main players.

A small-town mystery full of quirky characters and plenty of plot twists.

Great for fans of Tracy Rees's *Hidden Secrets at the Little Village Church*, Sheila Connolly's *Many a Twist.*

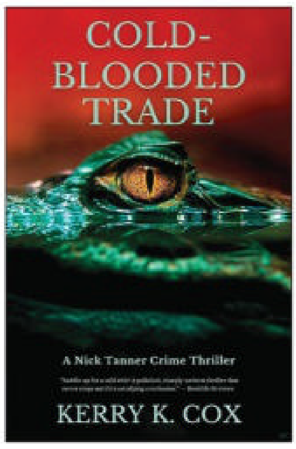
Cover: **A** | Design & typography: A | Illustrations: **–** Editing: **B** | Marketing copy: **A**

MYSTERY/THRILLER

Cold-Blooded Trade: A Nick Tanner Crime Thriller

Kerry K. Cox | Level Best Books

320p, trade paper, $18.95, ISBN 978-1-68512-297-3



Saddle up for a wild ride (pun intended). The third title in Cox's series finds United States Fish and Wildlife Service Special Agent Nick Tanner dispatched to the swamps of Mississippi on a job that entails trading 243 endangered turtles with a wild reptile dealer named Johnny Chang. When the deal doesn't go down as planned, Tanner—and another undercover agent— team up to shut Chang's operation down. *Cold-Blooded Trade* is an assured crime thriller alive with vivid characters, wicked plot twists, and jolts of action, set against a deadly, evocative milieu that finds Tanner "belly-deep in swamp water, boots sucked hard into the muck, all the while keeping a wary eye for cottonmouths and leeches."

Cox does a stellar job at penning intriguing characters that readers will connect to. Tanner leaps off the page,a doting father and a proud pet owner with a job that brings excitement at every turn. That pet is a highlight—a blind bobcat named Ray (as in Charles)— as is Tanner's unique beat, which gives Cox the chance to plot out a thriller that mixes a smart procedural with *The Crocodile Hunter*. The hero's personal life is engaging, too, with him balancing wildlife trafficking busts gone wrong with trying to get to his daughter's gymnastics meet.

While it's best to start with book one in the series for full clarity on Tanner's backstory, new readers will be able to dive right into the "slimy, green-black muck" of this entry's gator-holes. Full of witty banter, the wildest of wildlife, and action-packed encounters, *Cold-Blooded Trade* is a polished, sharply written thriller that never stops until its satisfying conclusion. Animal lovers especially will find themselves invested in Tanner's investigation and turning the pages to find out how it all ends.

This standout procedural sends a wildlife agent into the Mississippi muck.

Great for fans of C.J. Box, Pamela Beason's *Endangered.*

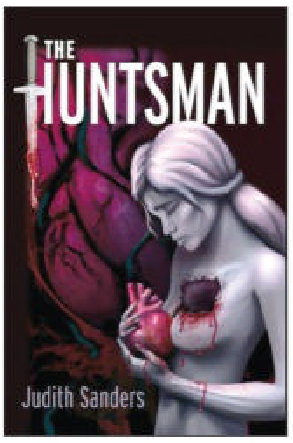
Cover: **A** | Design & typography: **A** | Illustrations: **–** Editing: **B** | Marketing copy: **A**

MYSTERY/THRILLER

The Huntsman

Judith Sanders | IronWord Press

289p, trade paper, $15.99, ISBN 978-1-938573-03-3



In Sanders's disquieting plunge into the murderous mind, young women have been disappearing in an idyllic New Hampshire town, and nobody knows when the serial killer called the Huntsman and his Rohypnol-laced apples will strike again. ICU nurse Max Mason thought he'd seen the worst of humanity in Afghanistan, but he wasn't prepared for the Huntsman to kidnap his pregnant wife, Annie, or for the prime suspect, Lincoln Douglas Raider, to fall into his lap as a coma patient. Annie's location remains a mystery, but Max, striking up a relationship, tells Linc that he has a secret of his own: he, too, is a killer, and they could be amazing partners, except for Linc's wife, Jolene, newborn daughter, Rosy, and Max's detective sister, Darby.

The tense story of a desperate infiltration into the life of a potential serial killer.

Great for fans of Alaina Urquhart's *The Butcher and the Wren*, Devashish Sardana's *The Girl in the Glass Case.*

As with the Huntsman in *Snow White*, themes of jealousy and love drive the plot: the Huntsman, stalking unsuspecting women; Max, willing to do whatever it takes to find his missing wife; Jolene, frantic for her ideal family life; Darby, hunting the Huntsman; and Linc, living on a farm that Sanders makes richly creepy, seeming to confess to crimes of his own. Sanders teases out the mysteries with an emphasis on suspense rather than serial-killer gore. Max's narration is compelling, and the compassion he feels for his accidental friends proves affecting, but readers will likely have a sense of what shoe's going to drop quite a while before it finally does. The final act, though, is gripping, and the novel is powered by fleet, sharp-edged scenes, memorable dialogue, and pared-down prose tinged with dark poetry.

The complexity of Max and Linc's relationship elevates the mystery into something like a duel or even a suspenseful courtship, as Sanders challenges and rewards readers' expectations—and empathy. The element of found family is unsettling, as is the detachment with which Linc prepares a rabbit stew—"Skinned, Fluffy has disappeared. It's just meat"—and discusses coyotes' zeal for blood. Such scenes pulse with nervy power.

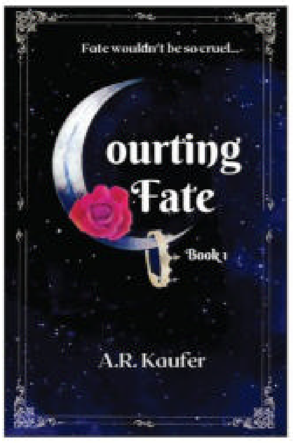
Cover: **A-** | Design & typography: **A** | Illustrations: **–** Editing: **A** | Marketing copy: **A**

SF/FANTASY/HORROR

Courting Fate: The Courtship Saga, Book 1

A.R. Kaufer | Courting Books Publishing, LLC

457p, e-book, $16.99, ISBN 979-8-9867469-5-1



Kaufer's epic debut is a fantasy, the kickoff to a series, but readers might forget that in the first 150 or so pages as, Ana, a contemporary woman with a deep fear of intimacy after experiencing abuse, gets caught up in a slow-burn romance with Rafe, the out-of-nowhere protector who saves her from a mugger and then refuses to leave her side as she's rushed to the hospital with a bullet wound. He's still there for her when she's discharged, tending to her, helping her handle the police detectives who insist her story doesn't quite add up. He's dashing but gentle, helping her heal, in every sense.

A woman's surprise romance with the man who saves her blooms into epic fantasy.

Great for fans of Elsie Winters's *Leviathan's Song*, Sarah Zettel's *A Sorcerer's Treason.*

Readers will recognize plenty of warning signs about Rafe's potential deeper motives, of course, as does Ana's reporter roommate and only friend, Kara. Kara doesn't trust Rafe but when called away on an assignment must ask him to watch over Ana, who has a history of self-harm. Kaufer drops hints about what might really be going on, but she immerses readers in uncertainty as Rafe and Ana explore a chaste but romantic intimacy. Perhaps to preserve the mystery, Kaufer writes from a brisk but distant third-person perspective, offering little interiority, so readers rarely are privy to what these characters are thinking.

That makes for fast reading, sometimes too fast, as confrontations with the cops, that mugger, and others pass too quickly to build tension. Eventually, Kaufer reveals the answers. It would be churlish to spell them out here, but readers should remember that, yes, this is a fantasy, with magic, questions of royal lineage, high stakes palace intrigue, a jeerable villain, and a dash of tragedy as the Maristellar Kingdom faces tumult and the story builds to a resonant cliffhanger. The choice to delay the introduction of these elements throws the book's genre balance toward romance, but readers who love the blend will find much here that intrigues and engages.

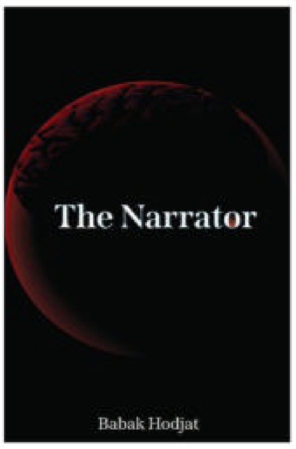
Cover: **B+** | Design & typography: **A-** | Illustrations: **–** Editing: **A-** | Marketing copy: **A-**

SF/FANTASY/HORROR

The Narrator

Babak Hodjat | Dastaan Publishing

110p, e-book, $4.99, ISBN 978-1-7354860-4-8



With a technologist's understanding of how Silicon Valley works, a futurist's vision of what's coming next, and a novelist's sense of irony and suspense, Hodjat dramatizes, in this sharp-edged novella, a bleeding-edge breakthrough in storytelling: the development of the AI-driven Narrator app, from the Narration Company, which draws data from users' phones and lives to tell original, individualized stories rooted in everyone's every day. Hodjat's own story likewise draws from real life, as *The Narrator*'s portrayal of behind-the-scenes life and love at TNC draws on hard-earned knowledge of how tech products get created and the pressures that can push companies to make those products addictive—and to take reckless risks with users' lives.

This compact thriller will please readers fascinated by how the tech biz truly works.

Great for fans of Cory Doctorow, Rob Reid's *After On.*

Those tensions are exacerbated once Lida, a market researcher, discovers, in the data she works with, that "there's something totally weird going on with our extreme users." She shares her concern with Matt, a technical product manager she's just started dating, and over texts, phone calls, and dinners the pair try to tease out what exactly seems off in her spreadsheets. The company's privacy rules stymie their efforts, tempting Matt to ask a member of his team for a favor: to look into forbidden user data.

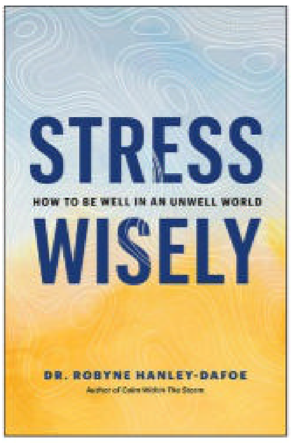
Hodjat spins this narrative from many perspectives, capturing TNC staffers' competing agendas, from an executive eager to keep the numbers up to please the founders, to a conspiracy-minded coder trying to date a friend of Lida's. The challenge of understanding a product's impact on users while still protecting privacy is compellingly explored. Hodjat's especially good at laying bare the personal motives of each character, including the twisted, self-preservational logic that inspires Matt to sabotage a promising relationship. This compact tale speeds by, perhaps too swiftly—it offers little dramatization of the user experience, what stories the app tells, and what users get from it. Still, the storytelling's swift, the milieu convincing, and the final revelations jolting.

Cover: **B** | Design & typography: **A** | Illustrations: **–** Editing: **A-** | Marketing copy: **A**

SELF-HELP

Stress Wisely: How to Be Well in an Unwell World

Robyne Hanley-Dafoe | Page Two Books, Inc.
320p, hardcover, $26.95, ISBN 978-1-774-58262-6



Hanley-Dafoe has had enough of settling for the appearance of "fine," of pretending that life is easy, and of the "unparalleled stress, unrest, and uncertainty" of contemporary existence. Upbeat and inviting despite its frank acknowledgement of the too-muchness so many of us feel, Hanley-Dafoe's follow-up to *Calm Within the Storm* lays out a clear pathway toward a solution to the "wicked problem" of stress. Her answer: "real wellness, not just surface physical health and social acceptance." That means moving from "fine" to "okay" to living a full life, a process that here entails self-investigation, understanding signature strengths and the capacity of one's "stress bucket," exploration of Hanley-Dafoe's eight touchstones of wellness, and the urgent reminder that "wellness is a direction, not an outcome."

While *Stress Wisely* bursts with insights from Hanley-Dafoe's resiliency research and coaching practice, the book's companionable, encouraging, sometimes even funny: "We will need a plan," she writes at eon point. "We will need a map. And probably snacks." Examples and anecdotes are fresh, drawing on Colleen Hoover, post-pandemic norms and worries, and up-to-date reporting and research on a host of subjects, from climate change to the distinction between "spiritual" and "religious." Hanley-Dafoe writes with clarity, persuasive power, and empathy about the challenges of adopting new habits and ways of thinking in a society that prizes endless hustle, sets unrealistic beauty standards, and "pathologizes normal fluctuations in emotions."

This fresh, insightful guide to facing stress urges readers to stop settling for "fine."

Great for fans of Emily Nagoski's *Burnout*, Matt Haig's *Notes on a Nervous Planet.*

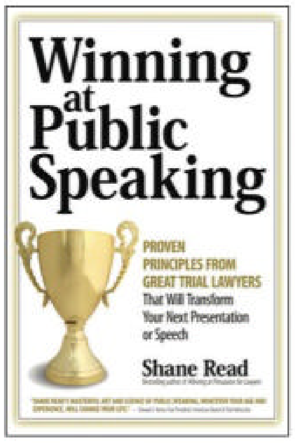
The material is somewhat sprawling, and the book runs long, with Hanley-Dafoe occasionally spinning her wheels for a paragraph or two. But there's also much welcome, original insight here, especially about societal causes of stress, personal cycles of panic and avoidance that cue yet more stress, and approaches for how to break free of old habits and debilitating personal narratives. Throughout, Hanley-Dafoe offers a host of inspiring and inspired advice ("Bring your experiences with you as data, not determinants"), backed up with evidence and delivered with wit and heart.

Cover: **B** | Design & typography: **A** | Illustrations: **–** Editing: **A-** | Marketing copy: **A**

SELF-HELP

Winning at Public Speaking: Proven Principles from Great Trial Lawyers that Will Transform Your Next Presentation or Speech

Shane Read | Westway Publishing
211p, hardcover, $32.95, ISBN 979-8-985-11525-3



Read, seasoned author of *Turning Points at Trial* and other persuasion guides for attorneys, offers welcome expertise to anyone eager to improve their speaking skills, even the many who harbor fear at the very thought of giving a presentation. "Being true to yourself is the starting and ending point of this book," he declares early on in this polished and practical guide, and he breaks that easier-said-than-done goal down into actionable, achievable steps that will give even the most anxious speakers a path to being their best at the podium or on the Zoom call. Public speaking is less a talent than a skill, Read argues, one that anyone can learn and hone with enough willingness, practice, and honest effort.

Demonstrating the kind of confident organizational clarity he urges readers to master, Read arranges the material into three sections— how to persuade, how to deliver your presentation, and how the masters persuade. He packs each with encouraging advice covering a host of topics (how to present without notes; what persuasive speakers need to understand about the brain; visual guides related to PowerPoint best practices) plus abundant sources, quotations, links to talks to study, and fresh, fascinating case studies from attorneys in the courtroom that illustrate the implementation of his methodology.

A courtroom persuasion expert's illuminating guide to persuasive public speaking.

Great for fans of Carmine Gallo's *Talk Like TED*, Mike Acker's *Speak With No Fear.*

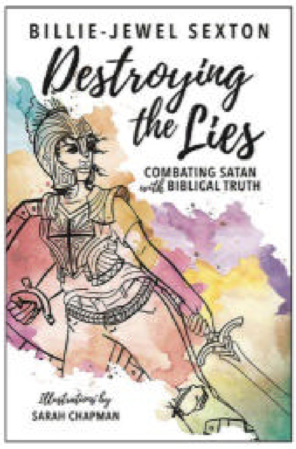
As the subtitle suggests, Read blends his own hard-won, up-to-date insights with tried-and-true techniques, from the Rule of Three to the "memory palace," and he explores tools used by great orators throughout. His clear, engaging prose style and emphasis on the pragmatic makes this guide accessible to readers new to the art but also a resource for seasoned speakers, who will likely find illumination in advice on video meetings or his reconsideration of the importance of listening. Chapter-summarizing road maps and checklists and a thorough index and table of contents increase the book's utility.

Cover: **A** | Design & typography: **A** | Illustrations: **–** Editing: **A** | Marketing copy: **A**

SPIRITUALITY/INSPIRATIONAL

Destroying the Lies: Combating Satan with Biblical Truth

Billie-Jewel Sexton | Bridge the Gap Ministry
234p, trade paper, $14.99, ISBN 978-0-578-84644-6



This compact devotional debut offers Christian readers an appealing balance of biblical study and self-exploration as Sexton analyzes the "misinformation, myths, and flat-out lies surrounding who God is." Each chapter examines common misconceptions related to Christian beliefs—ranging from understanding the personality of God to more weighty topics such as suicide and abuse—and Sexton offers contemplative activities to help readers "fight [their] battles and thoughts with God's truth." Sexton's focus on self-compassion while teasing out the underlying factors driving certain behaviors is particularly helpful, as is her willingness to broach some challenging topics that many devotionals avoid.

Despite the guide's brevity, readers will find it overflowing with useful information and exercises. Sexton urges transparency, using her own experience of sexual abuse as inspiration for readers to explore the traumas impacting their ability to lead a meaningful life, and she is careful to allow readers the space to individualize biblical concepts for their own needs. Those struggling with depression—including suicidal thoughts or self-harming behaviors—will find Sexton's welcoming attitude refreshing, and her acknowledgement that "life is hard, it is messy, and it hurts, but it is worth living" is comforting. She's frank about the lies we often tell ourselves, such as "things will never be better" or "judging others is harmless," and above all, she emphasizes the need for personal grace and empathy—alongside a solid sense of God's love as unconditional and restorative.

This Christian devotional offers meaningful inspiration for real-life problems.

Great for fans of Tanya Rad and Raquelle Stevens's *The Sunshine Mind*, Priscilla Shirer's *Awaken.*

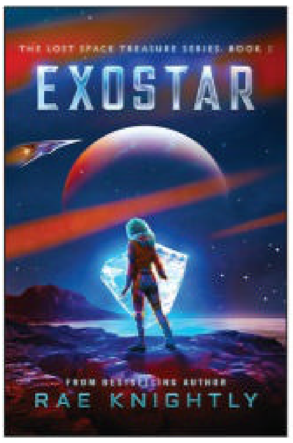
Sexton's journal prompts and guided learning questions—all accompanied by corresponding biblical verses and themes—will spark deep thought for readers, and there's ample space to jot down notes and reflections. Backmatter is both practical and informative: Sexton lists potential alternatives to self-harm, several national resources (the National Domestic Violence Hotline and the National Suicide Prevention Hotline, among others), and recommendations for further study on setting healthy boundaries. This is a well-rounded, practical devotional that takes on critical issues in an inviting way.

Cover: **A** | Design & typography: **A** | Illustrations: **–** Editing: **A** | Marketing copy: **A**

MIDDLE GRADE

Exostar: The Lost Space Treasure Series, Book 1

Rae Knightly | PoCo Publishers
282p, e-book, $3.99, ASIN B0BKFYBP4V



Knightly weaves a genre blending middle-grade adventure that's certain to entertain, boasting a planetary scope and a unique protagonist. Courageous 12-year-old Trinket Moonrise isn't sure if she's "a robot with life-like traits or a living being with robot parts." Either way, she finds herself at the center of an epic quest. She's desperate to escape her planet for a better life, but her compassion and loyalty to a young orphan boy complicates her departure. Unwilling to leave without him, she postpones her plans, comes face-to-face with a devious villain, and must lean on new friends to survive.

Knightly ensures young readers a thrilling escapade with this delightful protagonist. Trinket is more than a "piece of scrap" as she struggles to find a sense of self in a world without a family to guide her. Her prosthetic leg, affectionately nicknamed "Champion," is desperately in need of repairs, something that can be fixed on a different planet, but she isn't about to jump a shuttle and jet away. Her personal challenges carve a deep well of empathy within herself—and in readers—and she harnesses that emotion to save an orphan boy from a life of misery. Escaping to a better world proves challenging when alien oppressors hunt Trinket for mysterious purposes, but her bravery shines bright and exemplifies a deep-seeded courage that readers will find inspiring.

Nail-biting action and a courageous robot girl power this middle grade SF thriller.

Great for fans of Yoon Ha Lee's *Dragon Pearl*, M.H. Woodscourt.

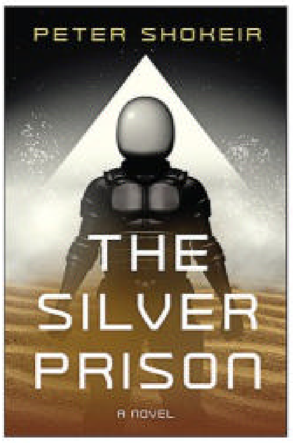
Other unique and eccentric characters bring welcome life to the narrative, such as furry fighter Woolver Talandrin. Some of the story's momentum and surprises slow in the book's middle, but Knightly sprinkles nail-biting action throughout. Many pivotal questions remain intentionally unanswered, enticing young readers to return for future adventures within the series. Middle-grade fans of fantasy and sci fi will delight in this creative and imaginative quest.

Cover: **A** | Design & typography: **A** | Illustrations: **–** Editing: **A** | Marketing copy: **A**

YOUNG ADULT

The Silver Prison

Peter Shokeir | ProductPublisher
331p, e-book, $3.99, ISBN 978-1-7386765-1-4



Set in Earth's next century, Shokeir's debut sci fi thriller, the first in a series, features a ragtag, shifting group of teens and eccentrics on a mission to stop the terrorists who slaughtered a military training base called the Bunker, which was full of teenage cadets. When a mysterious superpowered man wearing an unremoveable helmet is dug up alive in the desert, a young heiress named Victoria Zaidi soon appears at the semi-secret military base to confront him, convinced that he's somehow involved in the death of her father. A group of mercenaries aren't far behind, slaughtering everyone in their path except for a small group including a mad general and his loyal aide, Victoria and her bodyguard, a couple of lucky cadets, and the helmeted mystery man, who goes by Slate and can't resist wisecracks like "I'll go punch the kangaroo turd who's responsible for this right in the wombats."

That captures the tone of the adventure that follows. As the group flees through the desert toward Cairo, Shokeir pits them against a host of dangers: terrorists, attack drones, giant robotic spider creatures, and more, in action-heavy encounters. They escape largely through Slate's lightning-blasting heroics, though not without sustaining casualties, and make their way to Cairo, where they learn that a criminal organization known as Cloak, possibly run by other superpowered beings, may be plotting a massive terrorist attack.

This SF adventure mixes relentless quips with over-the-top action.

Great for fans of Darius Brasher's *Seraph Rising*, Jeremy Eaton's *Preparing for the Future.*

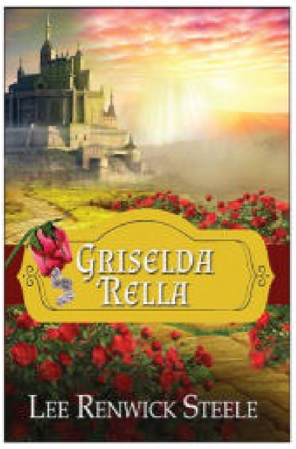
The constantly escalating action and stakes are the main draw of this story, though those stakes are undercut by a tendency to gloss over potentially resonant emotional beats—like the deaths of various members of the party—with one-liners. But readers who relish inventive, playful action and worldbuilding (a trip to a movie theater showing a jingoistic action fantasy memorably sells this future) and also relentless Deadpool-esque quipping will enjoy the ride.

Cover: **A** | Design & typography: **A** | Illustrations: **–** Editing: **A** | Marketing copy: **A-**

YOUNG ADULT

Griselda Rella

Lee Renwick Steele | The Wild Rose Press
322p, e-book, $5.99, ASIN B0BQGQC126



Steele's debut young adult fairytale retelling takes a very different, intriguing look at the story of Cinderella. Griselda and her father have a secret: they have fairy sight. At one time the ability to see fairies was considered a blessing, but it has been punishable by death for years. After her father is killed, Griselda becomes the only gifted person—known as the "fairy kin"—left, and she's now responsible for pulling fairies from the sunlight so they can care for the land—a skill she hasn't yet mastered. When her mother remarries just a few months later, Griselda and her sister are told to never talk about fairies to their new stepfather or stepsister, Cynthia.

Smarter and more cunning than she first appears, Cynthia knows there's a secret, but Griselda does all she can to keep it from her. Despite her best efforts, the danger of the "catch a fairy, make a wish" nursery rhyme makes Cynthia's greedy dreams come true. Griselda, a tough 16-year-old, is a unique, engaging character who isn't afraid to get dirty and can't seem to act like a lady even when she tries. Steele smartly upends reader expectations: in this telling, Griselda doesn't meet the prince at a ball, but has known him her whole life, growing up as best friends. It becomes quickly apparent that if they married, it would be Griselda saving him—and the kingdom—from himself, a refreshing spin.

A captivating fairy tale retelling with a refreshing twist and relatable lead.

Great for fans of Gail Carson Levine's *Ella Enchanted*, Brigid Kemmerer's *A Curse So Dark and Lonely.*

Griselda's relationship with the fairies, and their importance to ensuring crops, flowers, and every other living thing grows, gives the story added depth, and could have easily been enough to make it stand out, but Steele adds an abundance of interesting twists: readers soon realize Griselda isn't Cinderella—it's her stepsister, and the Cinderella-equivalent character turns out to be selfish and mean. Readers will love the twists, and though some questions are left unanswered, this will be a favorite version of the classic tale.

Cover: **A** | Design & typography: **A** | Illustrations: **–** Editing: **A** | Marketing copy: **A**

"The by-product of this educational narrowing will be millions of young adults who will be unable to function, collaborate, and prosper in college and the working world."

The Consequences of Book Bans

An educator and business owner argues that restricting what students learn will create a generation that will be unemployable

By David Lenihan

Politicians and activists who endorse clampdowns on books that middle and high school students are permitted to access in libraries, as well as in their coursework, are having their moment. In school districts across the country, they're enacting an agenda to shield children from information that's portrayed as being harmful to personal esteem, pride in country, or proper understanding of society, science, history, and economics.

But while these officials and advocates are racking up wins, they're unknowingly setting up their own and others' children for debilitating disappointments. When the tweens and teens whom they aim to protect begin their adult lives, the by-product of this educational narrowing will be millions of young adults who will be unable to function, collaborate, and prosper in college and the working world.

Should the young people who are on the receiving end of public school education "cleansing" have aspirations to attend competitive colleges, those plans will likely be out of reach. Top universities expect that applicants have a variety of AP courses featured on their applications. For high school students living in states where confining educational policies are enforced, AP classes in the arts, civics, history, and science will likely be found to contain subject matter that is deemed objectionable. It's not out of the question that these classes may be removed from public schools' curricula in order to guard children from teachings that are viewed as divisive. The absence of these advanced educational options will create insurmountable admissions hurdles for ambitious youngsters.

For students whose grade school educations were expurgated yet managed to attend undergraduate college, enrolling in a graduate school may be difficult. Depending upon how much these young people have embraced the externally imposed dogma that influenced the classroom experiences of their middle school and high school years, their undergraduate schooling will not have prepared them for the collaboration, critical thinking requirements, and exposure to varying perspectives that grad schools facilitate—including MFA, MBA, MS, and JD programs and advanced engineering degrees. As the president of a medical school, I can confidently state that a prospective enrollee who hasn't demonstrated a passion for provable science, human empathy, and intelligent analysis will stand zero chance of getting accepted by our admissions team.

In terms of getting hired, young job applicants whose worldviews have been shaped by a confined flow of information in their grade school years may struggle—especially if they're aiming to work at established companies or startups. In the tech startup firm that I've cofounded, team members who can't intelligently articulate their positions, seek to understand and find value in the ideas of others, or tolerate viewpoints that diverge from what they've been taught and have accepted as truth will have zero economic value to the organization and will be quickly relieved of their roles.

What the irate politicians and activists don't realize is that their plans to "sanitize" public school education and prevent "ideological conformity" will have grave repercussions on our economy and society. Banning inputs of knowledge that have been identified as potentially causing "psychological distress" will reduce the ability of young people to engage in strategic analysis. It will deprive them of the skills that are needed to cite arguments, demonstrable facts, and empirical evidence to validate their points of view. Such learning curbs will create homogenous and faulty conclusions that will lead to bad decisions in every profession.

Please know that I'm not only looking at this matter as a higher education executive and a business owner: I'm also viewing it as an old-school Reagan conservative. Our 40th president had no tolerance for the notion of restricting what students learn. He was an adherent of exploring "the diversity of ideas and experiences of what we call civilization." At a speech he made at the Westminster College Cold War Memorial in Fulton, Mo., Reagan stated, "So long as books are kept open, then minds can never be closed."

The notion that limiting the knowledge base of public school students safeguards their self-esteem and intellectual wellness is 100% conjecture. There are zero data points, studies, or credible evidence that this agenda-driven censorship will yield any gains. Unfortunately, it's an opinion that is gaining support. In several years, the harm that it has brought to our society and economy, and the disadvantage that it will have created to our international competitive position, will be verifiable facts. ■

David Lenihan is the president of Ponce Health Sciences University and the CEO of Tiber Health.

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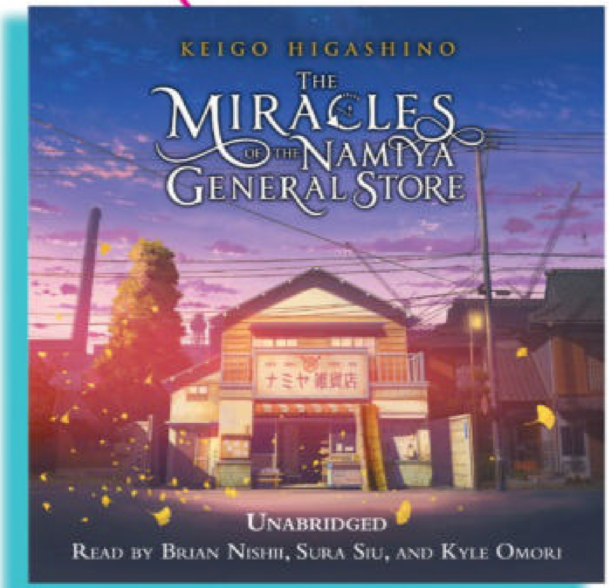
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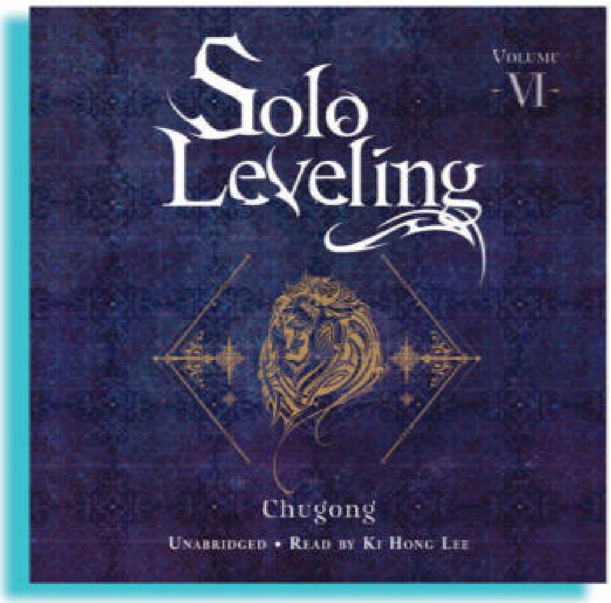
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